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COMMONWEAL

JACQUES MARITAIN & SAUL ALINSKY
An uncommon friendship between the philosopher and the provocatuer is explored by BERNARD DOERING

plus a review of Alinsky's biography by JACK CLARK

BLACK IMAGES IN ART

TOM O'BRIEN reviews a show

JULIUS LESTER reviews some books

MICHAEL W. FOLEY examines Mexican-Americans

RICHARD ALLEVA reviews Peter Greenaway's The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover

LARRY EVANS goes out with the kids: A Night at the Circus A Day with the Racists

GEORGE ABBOTT WHITE Czechs out the elections

& Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr., Gerald Weales, Geoffrey Gneuhs, Gianfranco Pagnucci, Linda Simon, David E. DeCosse

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CORRESPONDENCE 'Strategy Time' & Cuomo letter

HUZZAHS & HOOTS FOR THE GOVERNOR AND US

A middle ground

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: I am in complete agreement with your editorial, "Strategy Time III" [February 23]. Let us make an end to cant, and seek the middle ground, where, I suspect, reason can prevail. Democracy is certainly about individual rights but it is also about the social contract. Increasingly, abortion is tearing that contract apart. This single issue threatens to determine who can be elected to public office. And that is damage only in the political arena. The basic moral dimension is paramount but, as you point out, is being obscured.

Is there any group, extant or in formation, that follows your reasoning? I am ready to work with it....

JOAN DUNN WALSH

An end of dialogue

Middletown, R.I.

To the Editors: Thank you for inviting responses to your stand on abortion ["Strategy Time III"]. This series of editorials was very disappointing to me. Contrary to much rhetoric on this topic, I believe the problem will never be solved on an either/or, bipolar basis. Very few polemicists (including NOW types as well as Operation Rescuers) get down to specifics: Rape? Incest? Birth control failure? Severe genetic disease or deformity? Three months? Eight and one-half months? Sex of unborn? Mother's health? No abortion at all; any abortion at all: both positions are wrong to me.

I decry as well as the editors the social climate that makes potential human beings disposable items. However, historians have told us that when birth control and abortions were not available, infanticide and abandonment were the practices of desperate parents. We have seen this in Romania recently. A loving and supportive society is not coming tomorrow, and people are suffering today.

I used to believe in progress and the human capacity for rationality. I sure don't any more. I used to think the differences between religious viewpoints in America, unlike in Ireland, were open to reason and compromise. I guess I'm wrong there too.

I find *Commonweal* trying to have it both ways: on the one hand using the language of anti-abortion fundamentalists, and on the other calling for dialogue. With this kind of split, no dialogue is possible. As a longtime subscriber and a member of Commonweal Associates, I am very disturbed. I appreciate your placing articles such as DiSalvo's, but I feel your editorial policy is inflammatory rather than conciliatory. I feel morally I must withdraw my support and ask you to discontinue my subscription and take my name from the roster of Associates.

JEAN VAAS

Church not credible?

St. Paul, Minn.

To the Editors: You have called for a consensus favoring compromise on abortion, and you invite responses. I am delighted that *Commonweal* and some other thinkers have begun to see the light of day; we do need a strategy.

You single out NOW and NARAL as "having positioned themselves as the more or less official voices of the women's movement." You fail to mention the many other women's organizations which support a women's right to choose; they include such traditional groups as the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women, Business and Professional Women, the YMCA, and the National Council of Jewish Women. You accuse NOW and NARAL of not supporting legislation that would guarantee real freedom of choice—including the choice to continue a problem pregnancy—but you do not mention that many prolifers don't support family planning, high school health clinics, sex education in the schools, child care, a higher minimum wage, and many other social programs that could help families.

When asked why they won't participate in these legislative efforts, prolifers answer that their political influence is diluted if they become involved in too many issues. A single issue is the most effective political weapon. The rhetoric of NARAL and NOW has become more strident because of the *Webster* decision and unfortunately, politically, it is a means of rousing the troops....

It is the church's response or lack of response to matters of human sexuality and justice for women that in part explains why I find myself politically for freedom of choice. I grew up with the Catholic teaching that a wife must have intercourse with her husband—God forbid that you used a contraceptive—and if there were complications in childbirth the life of the fetus took precedence over the life of the mother. These teachings were balanced by my grandfather, a doctor in a large Catholic hospital, who refused to sign the cardinal's petition that called for banning the sale of contraceptives, and by a mother who promoted the rhythm system among the seventy-five women in her workroom

(Continued on page 364)

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COMMONWEAL 65

CONTENTS

Volume CXVII, Number 11

Correspondence	338
Editorials	339
Czeching out the election: *George Abbott White*	341
Down for the count: *Abigail McCarthy*	342
Personally opposed, but . . . *David R. Carlin, Jr.*	343
The philosopher & the provocateur: *Bernard Doering*	345
A night at the circus: *Larry Evans*	348
Poetry: *E.B. de Vito*, *Anita Tanner, Joan I. Siegel, David Garrison, Jeanne Anderson*	349, 352
My first field guide: *Gianfranco Pagnucci*	350
Screen: *Richard Alleva*	351
Stage: *Gerald Weales*	354
Art: *Tom O'Brien*, *Geoffrey Gneuhs*	355, 356
Unique among immigrant groups: *Michael W. Foley*	357

BOOKS

Let Them Call Me Rebel: *Jack Clark*	360
The Image of the Black in Western Art: *Julius Lester*	361
A Cloud on Sand: *Linda Simon*	362
Creative Communion: *David E. DeCosse*	363

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Prudent Ms. Prunskiene

What can be done to help Lithuania free itself from the Soviet Union's grasp? Or to help its more circumspect sister Baltic republics Latvia and Estonia? Not enough, and probably not much.

Last month's inconclusive developments surrounding the Lithuanian-Soviet crisis only confirm how volatile and intractable the problem of independence for the Baltic nations is. With the Soviet oil embargo making Lithuania's economic situation increasingly perilous, the shrewd and resourceful prime minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene, seized on Secretary of State James Baker's pre-summit visit to Moscow to press for Soviet concessions. She made some progress. Mikhail Gorbachev met with Ms. Prunskiene despite his initial refusal to conduct any talks with the renegade republic. Gorbachev wants Lithuania to suspend its March 11 declaration of independence before the Soviet Union will even consider Lithuanian sovereignty. Ms. Prunskiene seems to accept the need for this kind of compromise, but she must still convince the radically separatist-minded Lithuanian parliament of the wisdom of such a tactical retreat. At this writing, the debate was continuing in Vilnius.

Secretary of State Baker, while supporting Lithuanian independence, implicitly endorsed a suspension of the unilateral declaration. Cynics and hardliners note that the Bush administration would be embarrassed by a further Soviet crackdown in Lithuania, especially before or during the Gorbachev-Bush summit. Critics charge that with SALT agreements and other arms limitation treaties on the verge of completion, the U.S. would rather abandon the Lithuanians than upset *glasnost*'s apple cart.

But the connection between helping Lithuania and rebuffing Moscow is not simple or exact. No one disputes the validity of Lithuania's claims or the illegality of the Soviet Union's annexation of the state fifty years ago with the connivance of Nazi Germany. At this time, however, it is hard to see how the U.S. could effect Lithuania's rescue. Some tireless cold warriors urge forceful action, the imposition of economic sanctions, or even breaking off arms talks until Moscow accedes to Vilnius's declaration. Take New York Senator Alfonse D'Amato. Please. D'Amato scurried to the Lithuanian border in April brandishing a "Lithuanian" passport in a theatrical attempt to demonstrate solidarity with the secessionists. He was refused entry to what remains Soviet territory. Such antics demonstrate the notorious limitations of issuing moralistic denunciations about complex political conflicts. You cannot save a drowning man by standing on the shore and piously endorsing his right to swim. Somehow you must get from dry land to where the man is struggling. If you can't do that, it is not especially useful to go on screaming, or to berate the man standing next to you for not shouting as loud as you are.

Truth be told, Lithuania's fate is linked to, not independent of, the Soviet Union.

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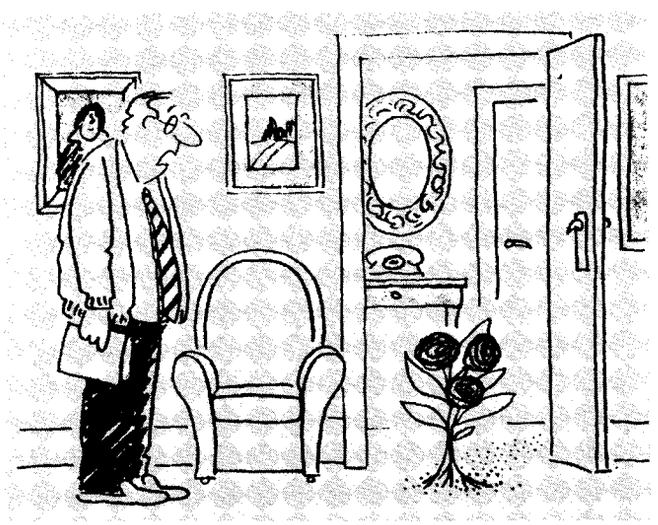
That is not a moral assertion, but a historical fact. With the end to the cold war and possibly to the arms race a realistic possibility, prudence with respect to the Lithuanian-Soviet conflict is not necessarily appeasement. True, such "realism" offers little consolation to the brave Lithuanians. But Lithuania's best chance for independence is to be found in a Soviet Union tied economically and culturally to Europe and America. Such an outward-looking state will find it more difficult to deny legitimate claims of self-determination. In this instance, embracing the oblique morality of realpolitik appears to be in the best interest of freedom.

Moreover, with internal ethnic strife and political instability seeming to threaten anarchy in the USSR, Lithuania's demands cannot be judged in isolation. It is not now in fact an independent nation like Poland or Hungary, but a constituent member of the Soviet Union. Its defiance of Moscow is seen as a greater threat to Soviet authority and domestic order. Latvia and Estonia have recognized this complication by embracing procedures for secession that fall short of immediate and outright independence. No economic sanctions have been applied to them.

Acknowledging these political realities does not vitiate Lithuania's claims. But some broader historical perspective is required in choosing a course of action. Ms. Prunskiene granted as much during a visit to Washington, D.C., earlier in May. At that time she offered little support to those who were eager to write Gorbachev off as a kinder, gentler Stalin. Lithuania's freedom is tied to Gorbachev and his reform efforts. "I want to spread rose petals in his path," Ms. Prunskiene said of Gorbachev. "I must add that for my own people, the people of Lithuania and me personally, we have been favorably affected when Mr. Gorbachev came to power."

As Ms. Prunskiene's recent efforts in Moscow demonstrate, Lithuania must adopt a more realistic appraisal of Soviet interests. Lithuania should continue to cultivate international opinion, since Gorbachev seems sensitive to it. But it also should begin the arduous task of creating a de facto economic independence and the internal democratic institutions that will make de jure separation easier for the Soviet Union to accept. That must include pragmatic political efforts to reconcile a large and suspicious ethnic Russian population to the prospect of minority status in a sovereign Lithuania. Estonia and Latvia must do the same. Vilnius should move toward compromise cautiously—but it should move. Politics is the art of the possible, and never more so than when the weak are at the mercy of an unstable, historically unscrupulous, and still powerful neighbor.



"There are garden plants and there are house plants. Now get back to the garden."

STILL WAITING

Secretary of State Baker told Congress last month that the murder of the six Jesuits and their two helpers at the Jesuit university in El Salvador in November "has got to become a turning point in the history of El Salvador." The secretary had just read the Moakley Report, the House Democrats' scathing review of the Salvadoran government's inept investigation into the cold-blooded execution. It is a gripping report—part police blotter, part white paper—and the strongest exposé to date in a U.S. government document of the corruption of the Salvadoran military system and the total lack of an independent judiciary in the country. It is clear from the report that if the murders at the university are to be a turning point in Salvadoran history, such an event will have to be encouraged, indeed induced, from outside El Salvador. It will have to come from Washington.

It does not come as news that the U.S. government bankrolls the Salvadoran government and the Salvadoran military. But our significant involvement with the Salvadoran military—and thus our responsibility for it—are unmistakable in the Moakley Report. U.S.-trained special forces, the notorious Atlacatl Battalion, committed the university murders. Just two days before, they had received training from U.S. Green Berets in San Salvador, the same Green Berets caught briefly in a San Salvador hotel when guerrillas occupied it. But the disclosure of Salvadoran military involvement in the university murders came only after U.S. military officers, skirting the U.S. Embassy, directly confronted the Salvadoran High Command with the evidence. Only then did the Cristiani government charge the nine soldiers. But, the Moakley Report makes clear, these nine would never have proceeded without orders from higher up, a fact the Cristiani government still refuses to pursue in its investigation. The bottom line: the Salvadoran military is effectively immune from the rule of civilian law. In the words of the House document, "Despite a decade of promises, tens of millions of dollars of U.S. aid, and repeated statements that progress is just around the corner, the Salvadoran justice system remains essentially an oxymoron—neither systematic nor just."

El Salvador is at a major juncture. The FMLN's November offensive demonstrated that a military stalemate exists; that no general uprising is about to occur; and that the corruption inherent in the Salvadoran military was a factor in the army's poor response to the rebels' attack (see Tom Gibb and Frank Smyth's report for the Washington Office on Latin America, "El Salvador: Is Peace Possible?"). The prosperity promised by the ruling ARENA

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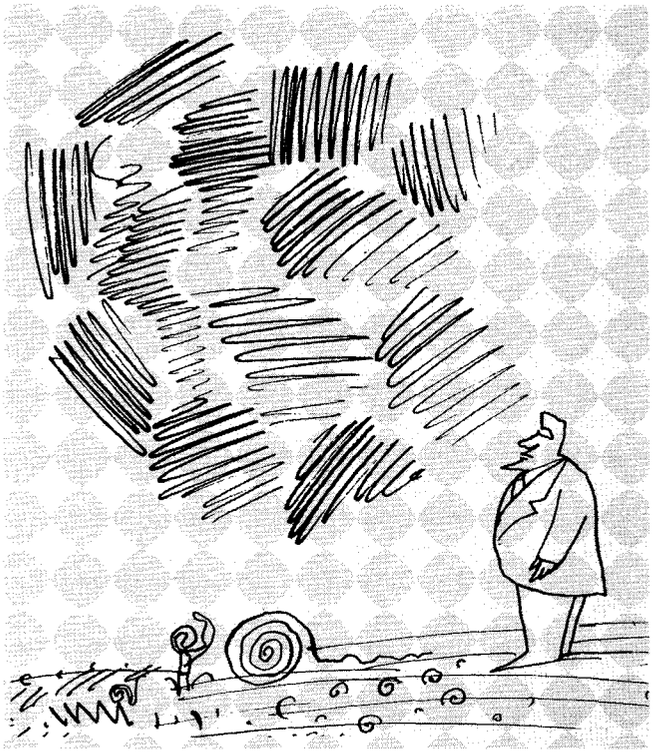

party is impossible under the present circumstances. The only hope for peace lies in a negotiated settlement: precisely the point the murdered Jesuits were making before they were executed by the army. The FMLN, following the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, now seem to be willing to show greater flexibility in negotiations. With the added impetus of UN-sponsored negotiations underway in Caracas, Venezuela, the possibility for progress has not been greater in the last ten years of bloodshed.

Yet the lack of accountability by the Salvadoran military remains an insurmountable obstacle to peace, particularly when President Cristiani continues to maintain, as he did last month, that a military victory is "possible," and when he refuses to press for fundamental reforms. Reform of the military is the basic demand on which the FMLN will not compromise. Without it, they will never give up their arms and feel that they can safely enter the political process in their country. Their perception is accurate. As Nicaragua is now learning, until warring factions can lay down their arms with some surety, the war will not end.

The Salvadoran government and military are dragging their feet. To enter into serious negotiations with the FMLN, they need a strong push from Washington. The House Foreign Affairs Committee's vote last month to cut off 50 percent of funds for El Salvador (and to reinstate them if the FMLN fails to negotiate in good faith) sent such a message. But with an appalling history of human rights violations—not only during the past ten years, but long antedating the present civil war—the Salvadoran military remains impervious to mere nudges. All U.S. funds used for the military should therefore be halted until a truly accountable, responsive, civilian-controlled military exists. With the prospect for peace brighter than at any time in recent memory, Washington must make sure that the present turning point is not lost.

REPORT FROM PRAGUE

CZECHING OUT THE ELECTION

NO FOREGONE CONCLUSIONS

This past February Václav Havel declined Harvard University's invitation to give the commencement address because the speech fell too close to Czechoslovakia's national elections. Some questioned his reasoning. Wouldn't the Czech president speak to greater effect in Cambridge than Prague? Wasn't a democratic victory a foregone conclusion? In retrospect the playwright-politician's judgment proved shrewd. Havel's energizing moral force and articulate democratic voice are needed and may prove decisive in the increasingly confusing, chaotic electoral contest.

Like other Central European voters caught between the cold war vise of Gold and Iron Curtains, the Czechoslovak "electorate" currently exists in little more than word. Decades of domination and subservience have silenced democratic debate and numbed democratic initiative. Routinized, mindless "voting" for corrupt, rubber-stamping opportunists created a Kafkaesque electoral process. The end result was a kind of "parallel" government: a Communist party structure preselected the government's "candidates," pre-approved its legislative "agenda," and decided what laws were to be "passed." Dry bones are in the body politic, foul deeds in the collective memory, and they cannot be regenerated or undone in one season, or by one man, however good.

On June 8 and 9, Czechoslovaks over the age of eighteen will be casting secret ballots for a bicameral Federal Assembly and a Czechoslovak National Council whose role is still unclear. The Federal Assembly will elect the president (currently Havel), premier, vice-premiers, and speaker of the assembly (currently Alexander Dubcek), and, based on their electoral showing, help determine which party gets what ministries.

Twelve million Czechs (Bohemians and Moravians), three-and-a-half million Slavs, and minorities of Hungarians, Gypsies, Ukrainians, and Vietnamese will vote for individual candidates endorsed by or affiliated with a still uncertain number of parties. Depending upon how, when, or who is doing the counting, the number of parties ranges from twenty-seven to forty; prior to November, five political parties existed on paper, though only the Communist party mattered. No one under the age of sixty has exercised the right to cast a secret ballot, following open discussion of conflicting platforms; and, according to Zdenek Slouka of Lehigh University, few "will confide their mixed feelings to anything like a pollster." As a result, pre-election predictions "will be grounded on jello." In the view of Erazian Kohak, Boston University philosopher and dissident translator, "A Western political analyst can't help but get it wrong. Their premise is a functioning, integrated society; they look for voting blocs not individual tendencies." Since November, "the Czech population is atomized; only the Communist party and Civic Forum (of which Havel is a member) can be expected to retain

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anything like predictable group allegiance."

The rectors of Czechoslovakia's two major universities, Radim Palouch (Charles) and Josef Jarbo (Palacky) predict that Civic Forum candidates will garner 30 percent of the vote. Other observers suggest that half that is a possibility, with the Communists getting as little as 6 percent or as much as Civic Forum's 30 percent. Four other parties are expected to share the rest: the Socialists, Social Democrats, Populist-Christian, and the Greens. The Slovaks have their own separate parties as do countless student and agricultural groups. The Anarchists will certainly raise a black flag or two; I've even heard of a Beer Drinkers' party.

The gravest concern: How many Communists will vote their own interests? Party members, their families, and collaborators constitute a hefty million people in a population of 12 million. A corollary question is how many ex-Communists and progressives will sit out the election. Under the previous regime full participation was required; jail terms and fines were used as encouragement. How many will now not vote as a matter of principle? Nonsectarian Marxist Egon Bondy sees a sad irony here if the party's staunchest opponents, perhaps 20 percent of the electorate, fail to constrain the Communists (and the ubiquitous secret police) through the ballot box. A critic of the previous regime and an early Havel supporter, Bondy feels that "Civic Forum must overcome its anti-Communist and anti-Socialist biases and provide a political place for those who wish a humane, active state."

The Velvet Revolution has been described as Václav Havel's "greatest drama." And, despite recent critiques by *Newsweek* ("the honeymoon's over") and the *Washington Post* ("surrounding himself with amateurs and dilettantes"), Havel is Czechoslovakia's "last, best hope." In a country where an estimated one in ten collaborated with the secret police and where the most creative were brutally silenced or forced to emigrate, the real currency of the day is accumulated guilt, demoralization, and postrevolutionary exhaustion. It is not Havel's script, he hasn't much choice of actors, the stage and properties are givens, and yet the show must go on...every day.

Both as national prop and prod, Havel has been extraordinary. Whether the Slovaks reject him or Czech exiles in America judge him inept, it is doubtful that anyone could do better, or nearly as well. "Havel is lovely," says the distinguished memoirist Heda Margolius Kovaly. "He opens his mouth and people have confidence in him." Survivor of Auschwitz and Stalin's purges, Kovaly takes the long view. "This is the first time Czechs have a government they trust. Naturally Havel's advisors are amateurs, the only professionals in the country are the Communists, and what dilettante do you know who spends five years in prison for democratic values? Let critics stop carping and come help."

As the "unschooled" president takes his show on the road in a European-style short campaign, criticism, disappointments, and tension will doubtless mount. "The presidency has always had great power," Kohak cautions, "more than Havel knows how to exercise." But Slouka counters, "Havel is a very quick study and he's been learning about politics since the early sixties, not November as Western latecomers believe." Those who judge Havel a poor campaigner might listen to Jan Stern, a retired Prague journalist who joined the Communist party in Buchenwald and now feels close to Christian socialism. "Wherever Vaclav goes," says Stern, " are crowds as far as you can see. He listens, and when he speaks, it's with authority because he's speaking from us." Electoral defeat of the Communists and more experienced appointees will prove Havel's strategy correct, Stern argues. A Civic Forum victory will render the secret police irrelevant. But Stern adds, "Václav goes beyond winning and losing; we were all losers and he makes us feel we can once again be winners. Helping us see beyond our slavery years and regaining our self-respect, recreating brother and sisterhood, Vaclav will locate the middle road between the best of capitalism and socialism, the individual's rights and duties."

It sounds "so simple and so simple-minded," he acknowledges, "but when you actually live it, every day, words come to life. A democratic election, imperfect as it must be, is our beginning."

GEORGE ABBOTT WHITE

George Abbott White lectured in Czechoslovakia in April as the guest of Charles and Palacky Universities.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

DOWN FOR THE COUNT

WHY AMERICANS WON'T STAND UP

The 1990 census may or may not have been a failure. If its defects are compensated for by a statistical substitute it may yet tell us the things we want to know about ourselves. What is our state or city entitled to in federal funds? How many Congress persons may we have to represent us? How many state legislators?

At this writing the average of census forms mailed back is 63 percent nationwide—but the returns from individual states vary widely. Alaska, for example, and South Carolina have returned somewhere between 44 and 55 percent—the lowest percentages in the nation.

People could not, of course, mail back forms they did not receive, and despite the substantial sums allocated to the census bureau and the years of preparation, "the first mailing missed whole apartment buildings, ZIP codes, even towns" (*New York Times*, April 22). That mailing missed individuals, too, and I was a little hurt to be among them. No census form in my box when all around me neighbors were discussing theirs! "Don't worry—they'll get you yet," said one recipient a bit churlishly, evidently looking on the census as a form

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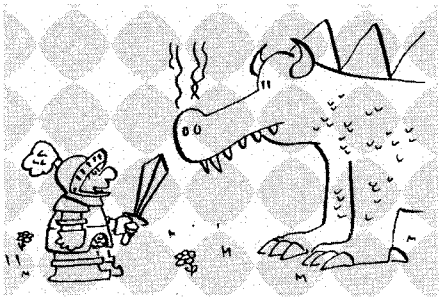

"Tell you what — let's go back home and pretend we couldn't find each other."

of government persecution. Sure enough, within days I received a card admonishing me to return my form forthwith. I returned the card to the somewhat mysterious Indiana address, writing righteously that I would have been glad to fill out the form and return it if I had received it. Being as skeptical of bureaucracy as the next person, I thought that would be the end of it. But no, the form came—the short one. (Considering our correspondence, I rather thought it could have been the long one. Not that I really wanted to fill out the long one, but, after all, had I not demonstrated a little more interest than the ordinary countee?) The form is stamped in large red letters "DO NOT MAIL. HOLD FOR PICKUP." So I await the census worker.

The census bureau is working on the other uncounted now. Temporary census-takers are going door-to-door. Statistical adjustment may be called upon to even out the numbers of the historically undercounted—inner-city populations, the black, the Hispanic, the poor. And while the census bureau is coping with that, we can look at what the census has already told us about ourselves.

The census form itself, for example, is based on a count of households rather than of persons. It presupposes many households quite unlike the conventional vision of the American nuclear family—households made up of unrelated people. There are categories like "unmarried partners," "housemates and roommates," "foster children," "adopted or unadopted stepsons/stepdaughters" which speak to the fragmented state of the family and the serial and temporary nature of many of its groupings.

And is the census bureau not unduly interested in race and color? Why is it necessary for a third- or fourth-generation American citizen to stipulate that he or she is Filipino or that he or she is black, Eskimo, Aleut, Chinese, Hawaiian, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Samoan, Guamanian but not that he or she is Russian, for instance?

Why, for that matter, the preoccupation with Hispanics? It may be useful to count newly arrived immigrants (and illegal aliens, if we can) but why is a resident of New Mexico or Arizona whose ancestors have been there for four hundred years suddenly "an Hispanic?" Said a friend of mine bitterly, "For seventy years I was simply an American—now I'm in some subcategory of citizenship."

The poor returns on the census indicated that an increasing number of Americans simply don't want to be counted at all or, at least, to be bothered with census forms. We can understand that certain groups are hard to count and that they are growing faster than the rest of the population—people of no fixed address, the homeless, undocumented aliens, migrant workers, runaway children. States with very large cities, therefore, naturally have lower returns than some others. We are not surprised at New York, Illinois, New Jersey, California. But why are the number of returns from South Carolina and Alaska the lowest of all? Is South Carolina so different from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida? And are the people of Alaska so unlike their brethren in the states populated by the same hardy pioneer stock?

The primary reason for taking the census at all, according to the first article of the Constitution, is to determine how many representatives each state will have in Congress. That is, to make truly representative government possible. One can only assume that those who do not fill out the form do not think this important. And the correlation between responses to the census and voter turnout numbers, state by state, tends to bear out this conclusion.

In analyses of voter turnout, the young, the less educated, and minorities are the groups with the highest number of non-voters. The conventional hypothesis, then, is that the same groups account for low returns in census forms. But, as I study the comparable patterns, I think I see something else at work.

What is happening, I think, is an ever-growing indifference to participation in any national political process. It is not surprising that it shows up on the laid-back West Coast as well as in the whole tier of states to the south from Arizona to Georgia. Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont had a good voter turnout in 1988 but show very low returns on the census. Their voter turnout may well be ascribed to their citizens' interest in local races. But one way or another the indications are that our sense of being part of one nation seems to be dwindling away. The country may have grown too disparate to command allegiance. Perhaps it is time to consider a reorganization—a confederation of regions, in each of which people feel rooted and connected and therefore willing to participate in creating and sustaining community. It is, I think, some twenty years since The Center for Democratic Institutions floated such a proposal. It seemed an unduly radical idea then. It seems less so now. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

PERSONALLY OPPOSED, BUT . . .

A MORALLY NEUTRAL STATE

"I am personally opposed to abortion, but...." This line has been a favorite in recent times among many American Catholic politicians. It allows them to conform to the church's teaching on abortion while at the same time respecting a woman's privacy in the abortion decision-making process. It has the further merit, at least for those politicians hoping to appeal to a more or less liberal-feminist constituency, of helping win votes on election day.

But the American Catholic bishops collectively, not to mention certain conspic-

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uous individual bishops, have been very sharp in their criticism of this "I am personally opposed..." line. It assumes too radical a distinction, the bishops have argued, between the political realm and the moral realm.

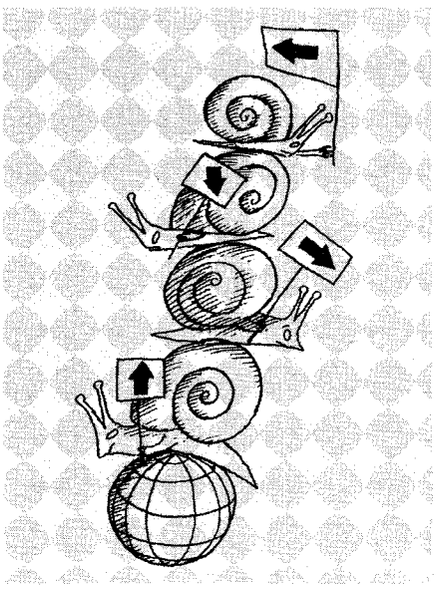
The politicians in question are saying in effect: "Government is one thing; morality is another. It is not the job of government to legislate morality; and certainly it is not my job, as a Catholic who happens to be a governor or legislator, to use government to impose my Catholic morality on others, no matter how deeply I may personally feel that this morality is sound and true."

To which the bishops respond by saying: "Wrong on all counts. Your distinction between morality and government, while valid up to a point, is too hard and fast. Morality is one of the great objects of government. This is not to say that government should promote a utopian morality; or a morality which people are incapable of receiving because of their bad habits, prejudices, or state of historical development; or a morality which undermines the very basis of morality by treating people as children, not autonomous adults. But it is a proper and important function of government to promote moral goodness; and you should not hesitate to use insights provided by your Catholic religion to further this project."

This dispute between the politicians and the bishops raises questions that go far beyond the abortion issue. At bottom, their dispute is a philosophical disagreement having to do with the very nature of government.

It should always be borne in mind that the Catholic church is a product of the Roman-Hellenic world of antiquity. This is plainly reflected in its organization and to a great extent even in its doctrine. In particular it is reflected in its theory of politics and the state, which has taken its shape and direction from the classical theorists of law and government, especially Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics.

According to the classical theory politics is an essentially ethical enterprise, not simply in the sense that public servants ought to perform their official duties in an ethical manner, but in the more important sense that the great goal of government ought to be the development of citizens of good moral character. This theory followed almost inevitably from the nature of the ancient *polis* or *civitas* (words usually rendered in English as "city-state" but which really ought to be translated "city-state-church"), a small, intimate community in which politics, morality, and religion had not yet been differentiated from one another. So deeply did the classical theory embed itself in the ancient mind that even when the Roman Empire had swallowed up all the once-autonomous cities of the Mediterranean world, this habit of thought persisted. In defiance of the new reality, the attempt was made to think of the vast empire as but an enlarged city; no matter how improbable the enterprise, the goal of government was still said to be the promotion of moral virtue. During a lull in the protracted civil war that raged throughout most of the first century B.C., Cicero, for example, was able to write that Rome was the embodiment of the Stoic ideal of the world-city, the city of God.



The modern liberal-democratic theory of government is quite different from this. In recent centuries, politics, morality, and religion have been differentiated from one another. We have decided that we can share a common morality even when we do not share a common religion, and we can share a common government even when we do not share a common morality. In this highly differentiated world, it is not the job of government to be my moral tutor; even less is it the job of government to tell me what my religion ought to be. So goes the popular theory.

There have been notable thinkers who championed this view of the limited state: Locke, the American Founding Fathers, Bentham, J.S. Mill. A close reading of these theorists reveals that they were far from indifferent to the promotion of moral virtue; but their emphasis fell on pluralism, tolerance, and the limits of state power, not on morality, with the result that their historical impact, regardless of intention, has been to advance the idea of the morally neutral state.

For anyone who thinks in terms of the modern, not the classical, theory of the state, the position of the Catholic bishops is especially offensive. Not only are the bishops asking that government legislate morality; they are even asking, it seems to the critics, that government legislate religion, or at least legislate a religious morality based on religious motives. When hurling epithets, the critics often describe the intervention of the bishops as "medieval." Well, it's more than medieval—it's positively ancient.

Of course the bishops could respond that abortion ought to be legislated against even on the modern theory, since abortion involves injury, indeed death, to an innocent victim, namely the unborn; for the modern theory, indifferent though it may be to morality in general, is not indifferent to injuries to the rights of others. But while this is a logically sound response, it is a response which is much more readily received by one who holds the classical theory than by one who holds the modern theory.

The bottom line is this. The abortion debate has to do with much more than abortion, and among those other things is the question of the relationship between government and morality. If the anti-abortion forces are to prevail, it may well be that they will first have to persuade our society to abandon the modern theory of this relationship and adopt the classical theory. But the chances of doing this in the foreseeable future are, needless to say, exceedingly slim.

Equally slim, therefore, are the chances of the bishops prevailing in the abortion controversy. Old Cicero is not likely to rise from the dead anytime soon. □

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THE PHILOSOPHER & THE PROVOCATEUR

JACQUES MARITAIN & SAUL ALINSKY

BERNARD DOERING

Fifty-four years ago Jacques Maritain published *Integral Humanism*, his most widely read and probably most influential book. It was a call to radical revolution, a rousing "Christian Manifesto" that earned Maritain the title of "*le chrétien rouge*," the Red Christian, from his Catholic critics. Maritain's revolution called for a gradual but radical "transformation of the temporal order," not imposed from above, but carried out from within, from the bottom up. It would be carried out by revolutionaries among whom "it would be vain to look for unanimous accord," but who would be in agreement on certain universal principles which are "capable of descending to concrete realizations" and on a "general plan which is truly precise and practical."

In 1966, thirty years after *Integral Humanism*, Maritain published *The Peasant of the Garonne*. In part two of the second chapter, when speaking of the role of lay Catholics in political activity, Maritain wrote that among all his contemporaries who were still alive at the time he was writing, he recognized only two revolutionaries worthy of the name in the Western world. They were "Eduardo Frei in Chile and Saul Alinsky in America." It is not difficult to see why Maritain would choose Frei; Frei, president of Chile from 1964 to 1970, was an internationally respected representative of the Christian Democratic Movement which, after World War II, had taken much of its inspiration and theory of government from Maritain's own political writings. But why Saul Alinksy?

At first glance, a friendship between Jacques Maritain and Saul Alinksy seems completely anomalous. Maritain—known to many as "gentle Jacques"—was the soul of discretion, politeness, and deference. He disliked noisy crowds, argumentative confrontations, and violent disputation. He lived a life of retirement and quiet contemplation, and preferred peaceful reflective conversations with a few chosen friends to the pressing, admiring crowds that filled the halls for this lectures. He was a fervent convert to Catholicsm. It provided a basis for all his thought: philosophical, political, aesthetic, and social.

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Saul Alinsky, on the other hand, was an agnostic Jew for whom religion of any kind held very little importance and had little relation to the focus of his life's work: the struggle for economic and social justice. He loved crowds, the more unruly the better. His gestures and language were muscular and he used the vernacular of a tough street fighter. Alinsky's principal tactic was to stir up nonviolent conflict, "to rub raw the resentment of the people of the community; fan the latent hostilities to the point of overt expression," to set cities and neighborhoods on edge, to incite municipal jitters. The soul of his tactic was a healthy, vocal, and aggressive irreverence. He loved to tweak the noses and pluck the beards of the establishment. One commentator called him "part stuntman" whose "method depends to a great degree on the element of surprise, calculated to outrage."

For Alinsky, the first step to organize a community was to disorganize it, to disrupt the actual organization of power. "Pick the target," he said, "freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it." Those in power must be made to feel uneasy, even ridiculous in the exercise of their power; this Alinsky felt could be done best by holding them up to public ridicule. Maritain appreciated the efficacy of Alinsky's aggressive, imaginative, and humorous irreverence. In *The Peasant of the Garonne* he identified Alinsky as "one of my very close friends...an irrepressible and much feared organizer of 'neighborhood communities' and an antiracist leader whose methods are as efficacious as they are unorthodox."

In spite of the radical differences in their personalities and educational backgrounds, Maritain, when introduced to Alinsky by George N. Shuster during Maritain's wartime exile in the U.S., was immediately attracted to this truculent genius of social reform. The two quickly recognized their profound intellectual affinities. Both accepted democracy as the best form of government and spent long hours exploring the democratic dream of people working out their own destiny. Alinsky shared with Maritain his ideas about the right of free association, where citizens undertake action and organize institutions to determine their own destiny through grassroots community organizations. Maritain explained painstakingly his ideas about the distinction between the individual and the person, about the primacy of the common good and of the individual conscience in a religiously and politically pluralist democracy, about the source of authority

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residing in the people who accord that authority to the government which acts in their name, about the principle of subsidiarity. Each man recognized in the other a truly kindred soul.

From the first days of their friendship, Maritain urged Alinsky to publish an explanation of his methods of community organization, a kind of handbook for authentic revolution. According to P. David Finks, as the war wore down and Maritain prepared to return to France, he presssed Alinsky ever more assiduously to finish the book, for he hoped to interest Charles de Gaulle in Alinsky's methods of organizing democratically run urban organizations as a means of offsetting Communist influence. *Reveille for Radicals* was reviewed so enthusiastically in the U.S. that arrangements were made to have it translated into a number of foreign languages. Alinsky insisted on putting the French edition exclusively into Maritain's hands. "I informed the University [of Chicago] Press in no uncertain terms," he wrote to Maritain, "that I began to write this book at your personal request."

What were the principles of revolution that Alinsky had already developed and applied before he met Maritain and which led Maritain to hail Alinsky as the embodiment—even though he was not a Christian—of what Maritain called the "Christian heroism" typical of a lay saint or an "authentic revolutionary"?

First and foremost was their common personalist belief in the fundamental worth and dignity of every human being, in particular of the common people. In *Integral Humanism*, Maritain wrote of the common people as the bearer of fresh moral reserves which assign them a mission in regard to the transformation of the temporal order. Maritain was exceptional in that he seemed to identify himself completely with a class to which he did not belong. In an article written shortly after the publication of *Integral Humanism*, Maritain declared that what was needed to win the working classes was not "love of benevolence" but a "love of unity,"a love born of connaturality, a love of communion and compassion in the real sense of those two words. "Before 'doing good' to them, and working for their benefit, before practicing the politics of one group or another...we must first choose to exist with them and to suffer with them, to make their pain and destiny our own" ("To Exist with the People," *Sept*, June 12, 1937). Maritain considered the recognition by society as a whole of the dignity of the human person in the worker and of a consciousness in the worker himself "of a personality in a state of becoming" as "the condition necessary for the future flowering of a personalist democracy."

In "Saul Alinsky and His Critics" (*Christianity and Crisis*, July 20, 1964) Stephen Rose wrote: "Saul Alinsky believes that the hope of democracy, and of the city, lies in the rejection of the 'subnormal child' image of the poor and disinherited. 'I do believe in the democratic faith,' says Alinsky. 'If not, I have nothing left to believe in.'" In an interview in *Harpers Magazine* (June and July, 1965), Alinsky pointed out that, "The most important lesson is that people don't get opportunity or freedom or equality or dignity as a gift or an act of charity. They only get these things in the act of taking them through their own efforts."

In spite of the shortcomings of the common people, Maritain considered them the best hope for the transformation of the temporal order, and for the future of democracy. "However great the error and evil within the people may be," he wrote, "the people remain the great granary of vital spontaneity and non-pharisaic living force." Though he had the same hopes, Alinsky was more realistic; he had grown up in a slum. In the same interview for *Harpers* he said:

> I do not do what a lot of liberals and a lot of civil-rights crusaders do. I do not in any way glorify the poor. I do not think that people are specially just or charitable or noble because they're unemployed and live in crummy housing and see their kids without any kind of future and feel the weight of every indignity that society can throw at them, sophisticatedly or nakedly. Too often I've seen the have-nots turn into haves and become just as crummy as the haves they used to envy. Some of the fruit ranchers in California steam around in Cadillacs and treat the Mexican-American field hands like vermin. Know who those bastards are? They're the characters who rode West in Steinbeck's trucks, in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Alinsky professed an instinctive siding with the underdog. He felt a deep and abiding anger against the exploiters of little people. He once wrote to Maritain:

> I can never be anywhere near the person you are because you really love all people and understand with a great wisdom. There are some people I not only do not love but hate with a cold fury that would stop at nothing. I hate people who act unjustly and cause many to suffer. I become violently angry when I see misery and am filled with a bitter vindictiveness towards those responsible. That is not good and I know it. I know just as well that I shall continue to feel and act as I have.

As the years passed and as various groups of the underprivileged achieved the vindication of their rights, particularly economic rights, and moved comfortably into the lower middle class, they felt less and less their obligation to participate in the reform of the temporal order. Alinsky recognized this as particularly the case with members of the labor unions during the 1960s and the 1970s, and he saw the necessity of including in the ranks of "the people," not only the "have-nots," but the "have-little-want-mores" as well. When in 1971 Alinsky sent Maritain a copy of his *Rules for Radicals*, Maritain replied:

> A great book, admirably free, absolutely fearless, radically revolutionary...I regard the book as history-making; and, in my opinion, the quite new ways you are opening, in your final pages, about middle-class people and the possibilities they offer, have crucial importance; if middle-class people can be organized and develop a sense of and a will for the common good—and if Saul is there to inspire them!—they are able to change the whole social scene, for the sake of freedom. Of that you have convinced me.

Another principle of authentic revolution that Maritain recognized in Alinsky was his firm belief in the priority of the common good. Alinsky defined the true radical as "that person for whom

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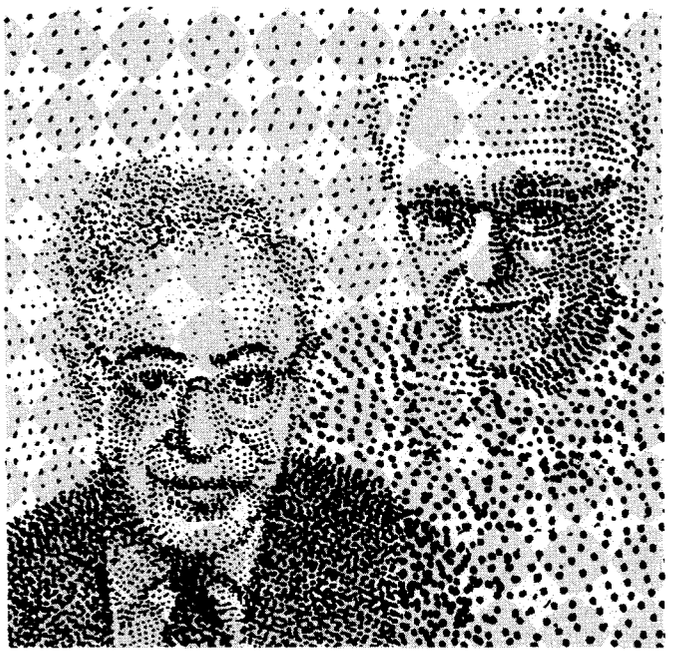

the common good is the greatest personal good." In the *Harpers* interview Alinsky said that one of the many great lessons John L. Lewis had taught him was that "A man's right to a job transcends the right of private property." In *Integral Humanism* and in *The Person and the Common Good*, Maritian insisted that, though the appropriation of goods must be private, yet, "by reason of the primal destination of material goods to the human species, and of the need that each person has of these means in order to direct himself toward his final end, the use of goods individually appropriated must itself serve the common good of all."

Maritain recognized that the most agonizing problem of an authentic revolutionary is the problem of means. "The worst anguish for the Christian," he wrote in *Integral Humanism*, "is precisely to know that there can be justice in employing horrible means." A Christian revolutionary exists in history, and, though he or she may resolve to use only good means to achieve an end, he or she knows that good means must inevitably be dragged into a context where evil means predominate; but the Christian revolutionary must envisage the context so that it may have the possibility of being evil in the least possible degree.

Maritain considered the refusal to soil oneself by entering into the context of history as a mark of pharisaical purism. An authentic revolutionary, he said, cannot refuse to apply his or her hands to this real, concrete universe of human things and relations where sin exists and circulates. Such revolutionaries must cooperate in the common task even when impure means are mingled in it by accident, which, he noted, "always happens." Maritain insisted on the basic moral principle that the order of means must correspond to the order of ends. In *Man and the State* he distinguished between individual ethics and political ethics. Since the end of politics is limited to the terrestrial common good, then such realities as power, force, coercion, distrust and suspicion, the acceptance of the lesser evil, etc., have an ethical foundation. It is precisely at this point in *Man and the State* that Maritain quotes Alinsky.

In training his organizers Alinsky met this problem of means and ends head-on. He instructed them to be comfortable and rational in dealing with irrational circumstances, and always told them: "You never have the best course of action. You always have to pick the least bad. The real question has never been: Does the end justify the means? The real question is and always has been: Does this particular end justify these particular means?" Though Maritain seems never to have been dissatisfied with what Alinksy did, on occasion he expressed his fear that what Alinsky said about means and ends might be subject to misinterpretation. Alinsky recognized Maritain's uneasiness. In 1971 he sent Maritain a copy of *Rules for Radicals* with the following inscription: "To my spiritual father and the man I love, from his prodigal and wayward son, Saul Alinsky."

In the same letter quoted above, Maritain gently chided Alinsky for expressions that seemed to be at variance with his practice and could give rise to misunderstandings.

> Now, let me point out a few philosophical views with which your book had not to be explicitly concerned, and give rein to my own inveterate habits as an old grumbler. I think you detest Hegel as much as I do. And I am aware that your praise of self-contradiction has nothing to do with Hegel. Seeking one's own intellectual liberation in an infinite proliferation of antinomies is madness on the level of philosophical thought. But on the level of pure action a kind of boldness in practical self-contradiction is probably, as you suggest it, the sign of a healthy and fecund mind. Yet it makes me jumpy.

Maritain remarks that there are two truths involved here: one a philosophical truth and the other a truth of human experience. He then explains the traditional Catholic ethical distinction between the material and moral consideration of a human act; how the same act of killing can be either good or bad depending on motives and circumstances (for example, killing for revenge or killing in self-defense).

Finally, what seems to have led Maritain to characterize Saul Alinsky as an "authentic revolutionary" was Alinsky's system of community organizations and neighborhood councils. Maritain found in these the near perfect embodiment of those subsidiary, mediating structures he had called for in *Integral Humanism* to enable the people to work out their own destiny and help the government do what it is supposed to do.

In a section of *Man and the State* entitled "Prophetic Shock-Minorities," Maritain writes that it is not enough to define a democratic society by its legal structure. Another basic element of democratic societies is that dynamic leaven or energy which fosters political movement, and which cannot be inscribed in any constitution or embodied in any institution, since it is both personal and contingent in nature, and rooted in free initiative. He called this existential element the prophetic factor. "Democracy cannot do without it," Maritain wrote. "The people need prophets." He certainly considered Saul Alinksy such a prophet.

> In a democracy which has come of age, in a society of free men, expert in the virtues of freedom and just in its fundamental structures, the work of such prophets would

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be integrated into the normal and regular life of the body politic and issue from the people themselves, or, as he wrote, from the free common activity of the people in their most elementary, most humble local communities. By choosing their leaders, at this most elementary level, through a natural and experiential process, as fellow men personally known to them and deserving of their trust in the minor affairs of the community, the people would grow more and more conscious of political realities and more ready to choose their leaders, at the level of the common good of the body politic, with true political awareness, as genuine deputies for them.

One would be hard put to find a more exact description of the very special work of Saul Alinsky. □

A NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS

A DAY WITH THE RACISTS

LARRY EVANS

"Daddy, who was the tallest president? quizzed my seven-year-old, "Ducky."

I met him and his best chum Jesse exiting their cozy little neighborhood school at the end of another gray winter week. The school sits majestically atop a hill overlooking a rusted out, closed down factory that once was the main source of the town's jobs. The only activity down at the plant is its gradual cannibalization by cranes and bulldozers. And what was formerly a proud "working class" town now houses mostly immobile retirees and welfare families.

"Taft!" I answered the question. "They used to call him 'Too Tall Taft' back when your grandma was a kid."

"No, dumb Daddy, Lincoln was the tallest," corrected Ducky. "Nuh uh," chirped Jesse, "Ronald Reagan's taller." "Maybe duller but not taller," I said. "Nuh uh," repeated Jesse. "My mom says Reagan was the sleepiest," piped the Duck.

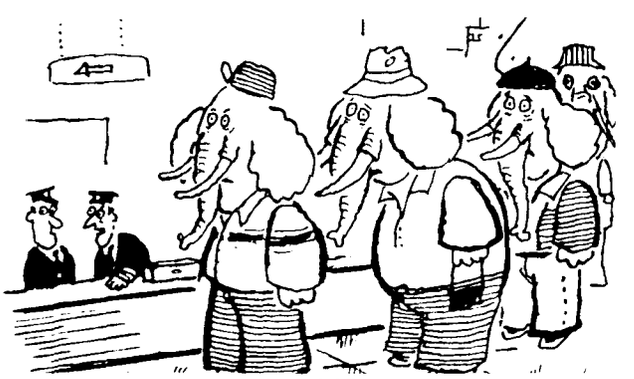
We bantered like this through other Presidents' Day trivia gems, until we found ourselves in front of Jesse's place. Reaching down the front of his sweater and retrieving a string hung around his neck bearing his "latch" key, Jesse uttered another signature "nuh uh" to one more of my crackpot answers and disappeared down the dank hallway of his crowded apartment building.

As we drove on, Ducky grew uncharacteristically quiet, then looked up to me with a slightly mischievous, I-don't-know-if-I-should-say-this glance. "I know why black people are so pushy. When they were freed, they got too much freedom and too much for free and that's why," he announced. Then he gave me a look of self-satisfaction, as though he had just passed on something you don't learn in school. I know his teachers well enough to know that the source of this ditty wasn't the faculty. Neither did it come from his regular babysitter, a black college student. Our friends and family don't go in for such simplifications. But it rang out all too familiar to have originated in Ducky's neophyte cranium. That this thinking lurks somewhere in my integrated, lower-middle-class community disturbs me—especially during these miraculous times when the far reaches of the world are experiencing freedom in practically unlimited dosage.

"Don't shoot at shadows, Duck," I said. "It's one of the oldest mistakes in the world. Freedom's not the problem—it's usually the solution."

That night I hustled the two little barbarians off to the Moscow Circus where we were to have the added treat of meeting an English-speaking clown from our town's "sister city" backstage after the show. We were commissioned by the local "sister city" chairwoman to fetch him to a postperformance party. The three of us had a fun time trying to guess which clown might be ours, the juggler, the acrobat, the guy that catches hats on his head?

The modesty of this Soviet circus might have been a shock to the average American customer used to glitz and hype of the Barnum variety. This was a simple one-ring affair of the highest possible artistry where a hush-toned ringmaster would whisper "attention please" to warn us of a particularly difficult attempt.



"They say their lives are in danger if they go back!"

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During the trapeze, he matter-of-factly said, "Attention please, what you're about to see has never been performed outside of the Moscow Circus."

The understatement rankled some drunks balconied behind us who, perhaps suffering withdrawal from the dearth of the usual hockey violence under this arena's dome, began a chorus of inanities like, "Miss one for Gorbachev" and "Hit the ground for *perestroika*," breaking the respectful hush of the 10,000-plus audience anticipating the aerial feat. As they kept it up and I was readying myself to go back there and negotiate with the rowdies, Jesse bounced up on his chair and bellowed, "Shut up!" in no uncertain terms. Duck and a half dozen other kids in the audience spontaneously did likewise. And the drunks shut up. Not another peep for the rest of the night.

We met our clown. He was the acrobat who could walk steps on his hands and he was a big hit at the party, performing and conversing with his dozens of new friends. After gushing over all the wonderful American advantages he hoped one day—soon!—his country would enjoy, I asked him what he would give us of the Russian experience that we could use? He mimed a brain scan on this question, then answered seriously, "I'd give you our Russian family. I've seen many Americans so caught up in the hustle for success that they are maybe feeling lonely. In Russia, true, we are crowded into apartments with huge families and we want more space!...but we've been through many hard times together and taken care of each other. Our people are poor, but they are not lonely."

At 2 A.M., I was the last to leave the happy gathering. Duck had long since fallen asleep so I bundled his carcass up for the trek to the car. As I seat-belted Jesse into the back seat, headlights flashed on us and a speeding red sports car suddenly screeched to a halt dangerously close to me. "KIKE!" "DIRTY, GOD DAMN JEW!"

I whipped around only to catch a glimpse of the young contorted white face as he snarled more insults while laying rubber all the way up the street. A groggy Duck reached for my coatsleeve asking why the man was so mad. I was speechless, but I was also motioning for the chicken shit racist to come back. He stopped half way up the street and threw his car in reverse.

I got out and closed the door on the kids and continued to silently repeat the challenge. I thought: "How ironic, I'm a blue-eyed, blonde-haired Welsh/German about to take on a white supremacist who thinks I'm Jewish because of a corner synagogue." He started back. Having been a college wrestler, I wasn't worried about any fair fight, but a rabbinical student had been gunned down in cold blood in the same neighborhood within recent memory. Suddenly I felt a nudge. Out reached Jesse's little hand presenting me with Duck's T-ball bat for reassurance. As I raised it in the night air, my approaching attacker switched gears and peeled away.

"That's a Cal Ripkin bat, Daddy" offered Ducky. "Nuh uh, it's a Darryl Strawberry," came the voice from the backseat.

I slowly patrolled homeward, imagining frightful "adult" scenarios if I happened upon a certain sports car. I turned on the radio and caught some braggart right-wing talk show host railing away at the black and Hispanic menace, decreeing *perestroika* a KGB plot to lower our guard, lamenting the liberals, so-called, proclaiming that unions were the next to go after the fall of communism. I had to turn it off because its name-calling content was almost within the kid's grasp—that's how low its messages aimed—appealing to a seven-year-old's mentality. I seethed. I pictured this hatemonger as a small, mean-spirited, lonely man, much like the miserly speculator that drove Jimmy Stewart to take to the bridge in *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Dropping Jesse off at home, I had the rare opportunity to see his mom. Like so many in this neighborhood, she's a single mother working two part-time jobs while her ex-husband, after losing his mill job (as Jesse explained), "got some job down in Florida." She thanked me for taking Jesse to the circus, and I left as Jesse began bubbling embellishments of our "other" adventures.

This night has prompted me to think that perhaps the real problem of my community lies in our isolation from one another and ignorance of the real lives of the rest of the block. Maybe we need a dose of the "Russian family." Together over someone's crowded kitchen table, maybe we should grapple with some important questions. □

E.B. de Vito

Tithes

In some
the gift of genius
is a two-edged knife
that claims
in its tithe of sacrifice,
reason or life
as not at all
too great a price.

Many paid
in their own way:
Nietzsche and Nijinsky
in the death of the mind,
Van Gogh adding as well,
untimely death
of the body
as though they believed
they owned
no other coin,

as if to say
of what was owing:
take me, and know
that I alone
am all I have —
am all I own.

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MY FIRST FIELD GUIDE

THE VIEW FROM A BIRD'S EYE

GIANFRANCO PAGNUCCI

Ralph was compassionate. When I met him, he was already seventy-seven and retired groundskeeper of the thirty-five acre wildflower preserve. But he still kept the day lily garden and was full of love for the wild. In my mind his thick hands still point out for me the patch of blue phlox and handful of fox sparrows. "There. In that clump of dry grasses next to the willow shrubs with last year's leaves."

Ralph was my first field guide and gave me my first bird book. In the back, frayed pages of this *Golden Nature Guide*, under "Records," is a listing for three years—November 27, 1952 when he saw a towhee, to early May, 1955 when he recorded seeing nine cardinals at once.

Birding, bird listing, or tally-hunting, as it's called in England, is an old sport. Roger Torey Peterson says a sizable list of birds was made on the walls of a cave in southern Spain (Tajo Segura) six thousand years ago. Unlike serious bird-watching, listing is basically a game which involves keeping a list of birds one sees. It started around 1900 when Frank Chapman began the Christmas census, now called the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Peterson points out that the idea was to record how many birds counters saw in a fifteen mile circle, one day during Christmas week.

Of course, early birders often verified with shotguns birds they'd identified; another Ralph, Emerson, asked, "Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?" Compassion is learned.

An afternoon before the time of mosquitoes I sat on a stump and watched a dusty-blue heron resting on the pond, sometimes rising in a stretch, then rising with a lazy lapping of wings, maybe reminding himself how to fly; I remember Ralph alongside me, resting.

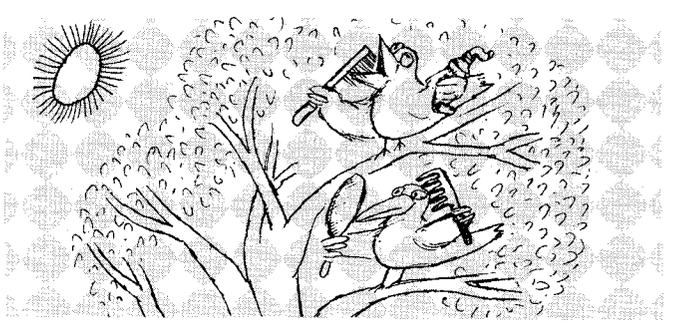
He was never impatient with what he called his wife's "forgetfulness," and he never forgot a place where once he saw a wildflower or bird. He said out there was his church; caretaking among a world full of weeds that flowered was his privilege and blessing. The birds that he spotted distinguished his year: May, 1954, "Field sparrow here for three weeks." What was different that year? Had 1953 been a weedy year? Was spring late further north? Did Ralph see that field sparrow all that time or was his wife Jessie counting the weeks it came to her feeder and calling Ralph to look, as in our family we'll call each other to a window for the first robin or the first snowflake?

Several years ago I gave my father-in-law a Peterson field guide to wildflowers. At least once each spring when we walked my six wild acres after that, he told me how much bigger I'd made his world with that book. What he used to think a weed had become not only a flower, but, with its notched petals, a snowy campion of a family of pinks (caryophyllaceae). He moved closer to look; his world layered; enlarged.

I was merely repaying what he had started when he gave me a Peterson field guide to birds. So our compassion colors our exchanges, and these generous responses pattern our words as our worlds expand. My wife says that for her, bird-watching is like her first biology class in tenth grade when a simple, flat, green leaf pulsed under a microscope as unimagined, unexplored worlds flowed past. For her, after that nothing looked the same.

Speaking of bird-watching reminds me of: looking out and trying to stand out of self to look; Ralph, who looked and so easily let go of things; and compassion—caretaking from the point of view of the receiver of the care. After his wife died, though his son wanted to take him in, Ralph went to a nursing home. He took with him only a handful of books, gave me a bunch, and left most to the new man who'd replaced him. He and Jessie and the books had had their lifetime in that cottage they'd never owned (this lack of owning was my thought, never Ralph's complaint). He hoped the new man might find the books and notes of some use, for they seemed more the furniture than the sparse furnishings of the place.

He liked the nursing home, though he thought everyone there made too much fuss over him. All the widows trying to learn the names of birds that stopped at the giant feeder they'd had Ralph put up outside the picture window in the TV room, and trying to learn the names of flowers. The poor state of the borders of tulips and irises and of the flower garden took more days



GIANFRANCO PAGNUCCI *teaches English at the University of Wisconsin, Platteville.*

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than he had or than his knees could bear. One icy winter he fell and broke a wrist, but that spring when I visited him, he told me, with a chuckle, the thing that hurt the most was his pride because he fell after his knees gave way, though he was doing less and less for the flowers now. Everybody was walking out to look at them for themselves, and he hoped at least a little of the new interest might turn some of the younger folks there to caretaking.

And I remember another spring when a yellow warbler crashed our window and sat blinking in the sunburst pfitzer. He watched me, all in blue, bend down to look at him; and in a blink of one of his clear black eyes, I saw myself in that liquid surface, grown smaller than a gnat, an outlined blueness looking down at him.

And a later April when my wife kept looking out and calling me to look at the birds sweeping through. Her eyes fluttered. She'd been inside all winter with the new baby, and her eyes danced from branch to branch. She said, "I'm glad you taught me to look out," looking out, windblown kinglets in her eyes, for she was thinking, compassion is a view from a bird's eye. I don't know if she really thought of it that way. A fellow poet at a spring conference of poets had used that phrase to explain my inverted-head experience with the warbler as I'd described it. But it strikes me now that what I saw in my wife's eyes that afternoon was just that thought.

"Why don't you go out for a walk," I said. "It's such a day. Don't worry about rushing back. I'll watch and feed the baby and try to give the bath." □

SCREEN

SOMETHING TO GAG ON

GREENAWAY'S 'COOK'

The English film director Peter Greenaway is a startling picture maker and a lousy storyteller. In Cinematic Utopia he would be commissioned to create short, abstract works packed with dazzling and abrasive images linked together only by formal aptness and some kind of dream logic. But, because he works in a business which produces mainly fictional features, Greenaway goes through the motions of doing what most other directors do: the making of movies that tell stories that have characters, settings, emotions, and that seem to take place somewhere on our planet, some time in our history.

Seem to, but don't. Greenaway's stories not only begin in his imagination, they remain there even after being filmed. They are embryos that grow to monstrous life without ever being born. Greenaway's characters dance attendance only upon their creator's whims. Alas, poor characters. If there were a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Fictional People, I would immediately send it to the rescue of the protagonists of *The Draughtsman's Contract* and Greenaway's latest, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*. This director likes to conjure images of suffering flesh, and so his characters are called into existence in order to be tortured. It's the whimsy in Greenaway's work that repels me, not the ferocity. Or, to be precise, it's the whimsy that makes the ferocity sickening.

Sam Peckinpah and Luis Buñuel were other filmmakers with insatiable appetites for violence. But, in their best work, cruelty reared its head only when a certain narrative logic bid it rise. One seldom felt, while watching a good Buñuel or Peckinpah film, that the plot was being jerked about in order to nail the characters. Not so with Greenaway's new work. Here, cruelty rules the dramatist. But, curiously enough, self-indulgent cruelty in art disturbs far less than cruelty serving as an indispensable element in an ordered whole. Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* kept me from sleep, and my father complained that *Straw Dogs* had the same effect on him. I winced at some of the abominations in *Cook* but walked out of the theater without dread. Greenaway's cruelties are too arbitrary and too arty to haunt.

I can hear the arguments for the defense already: (1) Since this film is an allegory of either freebooting capitalism or totalitarian oppression, the dramatist must be forceful in his presentation of political tyranny; (2) Greenaway does no worse than Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. Remember *Titus Andronicus* "with Lavinia ravished; her hands cut off, and her tongue cut out"? And how about those "vile jellies" in *King Lear*?

It's easy to see why *Cook* might be taken as political allegory if you were to simply summarize its plot: a hoodlum and his gang go to a French restaurant (of which the hoodlum is the chief financial support) and there behave, over the course of several visits, in a loathsome manner. They pour their loot onto tables, discuss deals, chivy the cook and staff, insult and batter the guests, regurgitate their food in public. Since no one calls the cops, the viewer must assume that the thief himself is in charge of society. He is Brute Rule incarnate, Big Bully if not Big Brother, and the well-dressed patrons must represent the affluent but passive sector of society (bourgeoisie? socialist elite?) that puts up with tyranny. The thief's wife, treated by him more as moll than mate but possessing a certain innate refinement (and played with provocative, tender-tough suppleness by Helen Mirren), notices a man eating and reading in a corner of the dining room. The man (a bookseller) and the wife begin an affair and carry it on in various nooks and crannies of the large restaurant. After the inevitable discovery is made, the lover is sadistically killed: stuffed with, and smothered by his own books. The wife, aided by the cook and a veritable parade of all the people injured and insulted by the thief, traps her husband in the dining room, and serves him the body of her lover—which has been cooked by the chef at the wife's request. (No, as Anna Russell says about Wagner's operas, I am not making any of this up!) Gun in hand, she forces him to dig in, and gagging and vomiting, he does. She shoots him dead. "Cannibal!" she jeers at the fallen villain. Queasy laugh from audience. The End.

No one expects an allegory to operate as a realistic drama does. But even an allegory, perhaps *especially* an allegory, must have a surface logic if we are to follow the story closely enough to grasp the underlying meaning. Through about one-third of

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Anita Tanner

Getting the Children to Bed

Time will fail us
before we go to bed ourselves
and turning them in
will be wild and complex again.

Tomorrow we will call them out of sleep
and a yellow bus
will return them to us in wind,
but not for keeps.

They will have grown, running
for the house like leaves blowing—
wheeze of brake, an amber pulsing
behind their sun-blonde frames.

Joan I. Siegel

Resurrection

Like Lazarus
my father rises from sleep
tossing off grey bedsheets
bemused.

Mold froths at the sides of his mouth
rot grows between his toes.

I beckon at the piano:
we read Diabelli (four hands)
as usual he plays bass

We begin together
then lose each other.

We make our own myths:
I am not Jesus
nor Orpheus
but my father's daughter
leading him into music from the dark

When I look back,
he is there
still

David Garrison

Goodwill

You wear so well the clothes of multitudes
your mother finds with her thorough hands,
these wrung-down delicacies of day-in, day-out.
From the backs of fat babes asleep in sunlight,
from the frail-veined arms of milk-sweet skin,
from the dreaming wrists and the light spaces,
come cheap sweaters, flannel shirts, and half-dollar sleepers—
the blue abandoned gowns of angels.
Your mother
will always know your body, knows already
the absence of your body, how it lies darkly
on bargain tables, nearly motionless amid socks and scarves,
almost a shadow, almost light's failure.
And your mother can already name the hollow sleeves
of your childhood, the red-hooded jackets
with pale pink and yellow mittens hung like
pulley cords inside, can already name
the frayed collar of other days, other nights,
your sleeping body warm in her arms, as
moonlit leaf shadows water the thin white blinds.

Jeanne Anderson

Some Note I Can Not Hold

My daughter, fifteen, plays clarinet.
And I, dutiful parent, sit
In a corner of the stadium bleachers,
To the east and north against meshed fence,
And ache, ache for those boys who do not
Know they need weight, do not know weight.

Marbled beef their red and white uniforms,
They lean toward the blued water jerseys
Of another team, an other team.

She plays America the Beautiful
And I do not stand, and do not stand.
Behind me the white houses of America,
Under turquoise skies on smooth clipped green,
Listen without comment, listen with out,
Their rooflines bent with that weight.

Cheerleaders with small, early bodies—
Bodies I have watched cascade across the green field—
Let go their gravity and lift, let go and lift.

And my daughter—early, fifteen, green—
Plays again some note, some note I can not hold,
Some note I must let go to lift, let go to weight.

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its running time, *Cook* holds the audience with its cat-and-mouse melodrama of brutal husband and furtive adulterers. Dextrous filmmaking helps: as the camera pans, left to right, from the blue brutality of the restaurant's courtyard (where the thief beats the victims) through the underwater green of the kitchen (where the lovers stop time with their passion) to the splashy red vulgarity of the dining room (where gorging, disgorging, anger, and lewdness dominate), we know we are in the hands of a master visualizer.

But soon we are trying to wriggle out of those hands, for who wants to be in the grip of someone who can see and not think? who can compose a picture but not care about his own characters?

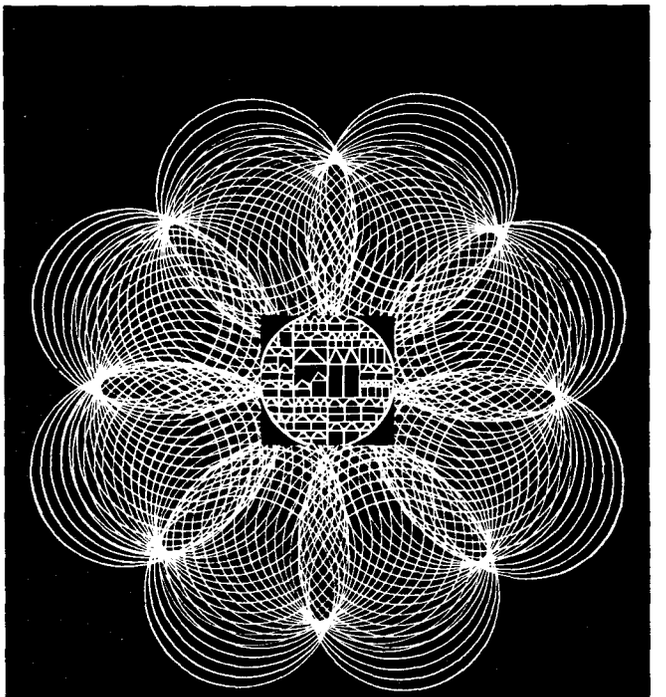
If the thief is Head Barbarian, why don't the restaurant patrons recognize him? Having destroyed the bookseller, the thief is warned by a henchman that he may get into trouble for the murder. In trouble with whom? With the police? What police? With rival gangsters? What rivals? Just how powerful is this thief, and in what sort of society does he live? Greenaway can't suggest an answer because his film has no vision of the dynamics of a society, something that all good allegories, from *The Republic* to *The Castle* to *Lord of the Flies*, have.

Perhaps *Cook* is not an allegory but a piece of Jacobean cinema, an example of cruelty as catharsis that shouldn't be held to strict standards of plotting and characterization? Perhaps. But. We venerate the author of *King Lear* for widening and deepening our perception of what life can be at its worst. (My eyes fall upon the news photo of a mother running through the streets of Lebanon after learning that all three of her children have been killed by a terrorist bomb.) We despise the author of *Titus Andronicus* for coasting on cruelty to get easy shudders from the groundlings. Shakespeare started as a purveyor of cheap thrills but grew into a conveyer of profound shudders. Greenaway, as a filmmaker, is much more sophisticated at this stage of his career than Shakespeare was as a versemaker while writing *Titus Andronicus*. But Greenaway's mind and sensibility operate at the level of Grand Guignol. Are we to praise him for making the art house groundlings giggle?

No matter what his admirers claim for him, Greenaway is probably interested in neither allegory nor cruel catharsis. He is a postmodernist par excellence. He imagines and stages the various segments of his story for the maximum frisson each part will produce without regard as to how the parts will interlock, reflect on each other, and cohere to create unity, substance, beauty. He wants to show the eating of food alongside the vomiting of it. And so he does. When the thief raids a ladies' room in search of his wife and slams open the stalls, Greenaway gets a chance to show an old woman sitting on a toilet. And so he does. Because special effects departments are wizardly these days, Greenaway can create the illusion of the bookseller's chest cracked open by torturers and stuffed with paper. And so Greenaway does and does and does. He does it all to his characters and, dear reader and viewer, he does it all to you. Happy movie going.

RICHARD ALLEVA

Richard Alleva was formerly the movie critic for Crisis *magazine.*



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STAGE

LITTLE ELEPHANTS

'CASINO PARADISE' & 'ASPECTS OF LOVE'

When *The Phantom of the Opera* was new to Broadway, the *New York Times* (January 28, 1988) asked a number of composers and performers to comment on Andrew Lloyd Webber's score. Some were scathing (Ned Rorem: "the chutzpah's turned into commerce, and the corn into smarm"), but William Bolcom was almost congenial as he described Lloyd Webber as the creator of a kind of English Italianate opera in which the music is in the service of the total show, the score interesting only as accompaniment to theatrical effects. "In the circus," Bolcom said, "you want just the right music for the elephants, but it's the elephants you're meant to watch." The elephants—little elephants this time—are back in Lloyd Webber's latest presold musical investment package, *Aspects of Love*. Fittingly, on the night it opened at the Broadhurst, William Bolcom's latest theater piece, *Casino Paradise*, opened in Philadelphia, the first offering of the 1990 American Music Theater Festival.

There is no room for elephants on Philadelphia's tiny Plays & Players stage, but Philipp Jung (scenery) and Heather Carson (lights) managed to suggest the building of the casino in the limited space, even allowing us to watch it burn at the end. There was constant movement, as one scene melted into another, one song swallowed the next; this was presumably the work of David Alden, the opera director doing his first musical, who is credited with having "conceived and directed" the production. These are not technicians in business for themselves, using Bolcom's music to decorate their inventions. Bolcom's score is the driving force of the show, carrying the audience toward what Alden calls "a Verdi-like ending" (Philadelphia *Inquirer*, April 1). When the show slows down for a quiet number—say, the sextet "When You're in Love"—the singers, most of them playing nonlovers, color the song itself, making it less a restful moment than a jumping-off place for the final disaster.

Anyone who knows *Dynamite Tonight* (we are a small but select group), the antiwar piece that Bolcom wrote to Arnold Weinstein's libretto in the 1960s, expects their satire to be convoluted. Back together again for *Casino Paradise* (with a little help from Thomas Babe), they have taken on power, its fascination and its destructiveness, in a fable about a man who wrecks a beach community to build the titular pleasure palace. Since the show opened the same week that Donald Trump's Taj Mahal did in Atlantic City, direct satire would have been lost; the local news shows, pandering to Trump, were more outrageous than the Bolcom-Weinstein TV commentator who shills for the casino. It was presumably ignorance not wit that named Trump's Taj after a mausoleum, but the makers of the musical understand the connection between glitz and decay.

There are no accidental metaphors in *Casino Paradise*. The first act really belongs to the gangster-entrepreneur, a ruthlessly likable Irish con man, as Timothy Nolan played him, seducing the small business people by tickling their own greed. In the second act, the soured idealist son, who shot his father in act 1 and still failed to stop the casino, had found a new role—real son of his father. Although this born-again buccaneer is at the center of what Alden calls a "more discursive" act, he shares space with his sister who has bought a husband; his father who hates what he has created but does not want to let go; his lover, a bearded transvestite; a mysterious nurse who is an angel of mercy or death or money. There is probably more going on in this act than the work can comfortably sustain, but Bolcom and Weinstein want the corruption to go beyond the beachfront to take in the family and society as a whole. There is an underlay of too obvious psychology in the piece ("I Do Not Hate My Father," sings the idealist in act 1), but the final declaration of mutual love between the son and the dying father is more than a pop-psychology variation of the doomed-lovers opera finale. It is followed by a reprise of "Casino Paradise," the hard-sell song from act 1 which has now become dark, ugly, painful. Despite the somber side of *Casino Paradise*, I came away from it buoyed by Bolcom's music and Weinstein's words. Contrariwise, I dragged out of the Broadhurst, weighed down by the leadenness of Lloyd Webber's book and music.

The elephantine elements in *Aspects of Love* are minimal. At one point the top does lift off an alp to provide a change of perspective, a device that was greeted with surprise and pleasure by those members of the audience who did not simply laugh at the foolishness of it. The producer (Lloyd Webber under another hat) deserves some kind of reaction for the $8 million the show has cost. For the most part, the focus is small, keeping to the handful of characters whose shifting love relations are supposed to fill us with a sense of the sadness, the sweetness, the irony of it all. In David Garnett's novel on which the musical is based,

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George's poetry (he is a painter in the musical) is described as "not at all technically exciting. But in his flat way he does seem to be able to deal with delicate and complex emotions, and to be able to reduce them to manageable proportions!" I assume that Garnett is really describing his own book, perhaps not in the way he intended, for manageable flatness is about the best one can say for his tiny, tedious novel. Lloyd Webber, whose book follows the original carefully, has achieved a similar tone in his score.

The real irony has nothing to do with the theme of *Aspects of Love*, but with the fact that the show, without a roller-skating engine or a falling chandelier, has an $11-million advance sale, while *Casino Paradise*, so much more alive, has played its limited run and retired to the wings waiting for a new production to rescue it.

GERALD WEALES

ART

PIGMENTS OF THE IMAGINATION

'FACING HISTORY' IN BROOKLYN

"Facing History: the Black Image in American Art, 1710-1940" is an exciting exhibit for several reasons. The show, now at the Brooklyn Museum, contains many fine paintings by well-known eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American artists, some of whom sadly resort to racial stereotypes; others depict black dignity and individuality with great sensitivity. These express a surprising and affecting appeal for racial harmony from a bygone era.

But the show has another side—its catalogue, wall labels, and the assertive publicity that have accompanied it. Its curators, who have done an excellent job gathering materials, have also burdened the show with some excessive claims. The show, in this view, reveals that artists saw blacks as foolish servants, clownish entertainers, or simian subhumans. This is half-true, but misleading; still, the exaggerration is characteristic of our times. "Facing History" isn't just an exhibit, but an example of the current, often abrasive clash of art criticism and ideology: politically astute art historians want to inspect the subtexts of an artwork, its hidden agenda. Well and good—especially if they also make clear their own agenda.

In both its fine and troubling aspects, the show is mostly the work of Guy McElroy, a black art historian and consultant at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, where the show opened earlier this year. According to his catalogue essay, McElroy sees the show as an artistic record of America's limited imagination of black identity. Most blacks pictured are slaves, entertainers, preachers, or, in early Kentucky Derby paintings, athletes. Some of this is historical fact; many blacks were limited to such roles. But gross caricatures that go beyond documentary to insult are also there. Even works with good intentions, such as Samuel Jenning's, "Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences" (1792), reveal the subtle racism of benign condescension. "Liberty" is symbolized as a gracious young white lady dressed in delicate muslin holding out books to eager, submissive blacks.

McElroy is right in arguing that similar images dominate other media. For sculpture, stroll by the old Customs House in lower Manhattan where four female statues representing the continents depict the U.S.'s stereotypical racism: Europe is aging and wary; Asia serene but inscrutable; America young and perky; Africa, sound asleep. As McElroy notes, post-Civil War America was poisoned by caricature in dolls, cartoons, and sheet music illustrated with big-toothed, bug-eyed blacks mindlessly munching watermelons. McElroy has saved this material for the catalogue, some comments on labels, and a thirty-minute video on racist caricatures in film and TV. For the show proper, he has chosen paintings by Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, Frederic Remington, John Singleton Copley, and genre-master William Sidney Mount. As a result of these inclusions and exclusions, McElroy—lacking the real villains—tends to interpret overingeniously. He underrates some obvious positive images while finding negative ones that don't seem to be there.

There are many items in the show, but the eye is attracted to the works of the more famous artists around which the current critical and journalistic controversy swirls. For example, Homer's "Watermelon Boys" (1876) depicts three boys (two white, one black) enjoying a summer afternoon in a field. Some books lie in the grass; the boys are either playing hooky or are on their way home from school. The black occupies the central position, is intelligent, and is treated with no condescension. His alertness may have to do with his wariness of being caught (either at hooky or munching on the fruit); if so, Homer may be protesting against the way a black might be punished more severely than a white. McElroy openly says that the painting doesn't foster the watermelon stereotype, which came later. But it would be more fair to say that the picture contradicts it entirely: it portrays interracial harmony.

Or take Eakins's 1876 painting, "Will Schuster and Blackman Going Shooting (Rail Shooting)," in which the black man stands out. McElroy notes the pair's coldness, joined only by a business link, with the "blackman" clearly in the subordinate role. This may only be Eakins's realism and his documentary treatment; he had no choice but to depict a hierarchy. Where he had a choice, in his tone, he undercuts hierarchy by suggesting the common absorption of both men in the hunt. The black aide is as involved as Schuster.

Or take Copley's "Watson and the Shark" (1778). The painting was based on an actual event, an adventure of the mayor of London, when, as a young man, he narrowly escaped being eaten in Havana harbor. Watson's black servant is at the top of the canvas, holding a line out for rescue, leading some art critics to claim he occupies a position of honor. Others say his handling of the rope is naive. McElroy sees the work as "conservative" and claims that it symbolizes English fear of loss of empire. What this reading omits is the larger context for this early *Jaws*, images of "nature red in tooth and claw" in many paintings (George Stubbs) and poems (James Thomson) of the period. "Watson" opposes men and nature, not man and man; the servant

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is simply part of the story.

None of this is to deny racial stereotyping or to argue that works of art are above deconstruction. For all its beauty, art is not sacred, and its mythic aura sometimes needs debunking. Works of art are human creations. All artists have worldviews: none comes to a canvas without a background, a family, a society, and the assumptions from each that they either define themselves by or *against*. With one key proviso, it helps to read visual texts for their class, racial, and sexual subtexts. There is no problem with a critic uncovering an artist's hidden agenda—except when it serves to mask the critic's own. The critic's ideology is a subtext too, and his critic's as well.

McElroy's work is intelligent, innovative, educational, and on the whole balanced: he does not deny the aesthetic beauty of those paintings he questions. As a black, he has reason to be disturbed by many of their images; as a white, I don't see with his eyes. Still, his periodic mistakes in judgment exemplify two wider tendencies: the relentless pursuit of the sense of victimization that mars so many justified protests and the trendy radical McCarthyism keen to find oppressors under every bed, play, novel, and work of art. Blacks (undeniably) have been victims, even of art; but this doesn't mean nearly every white artist is guilty of their victimization.

Overstating victimization obscures the real issue—not how some artists were racist, but why some of their implied images of racial equality were abandoned. In fact, the best items in the show have the least taint of racism. Remington's paintings of black cavalry after the Civil War—"buffalo soldiers" the Indians called them—have all the gritty heroism of his white troopers. Saint-Gaudens's model of a bust of a member of the Massachusetts 54th—the regiment in *Glory*—rivets attention, as does its final sculpture across from the Boston statehouse. Why damn all our ancestors if we still fail to realize the best visions of the best of them? You can go to "Facing History" and emerge with a conclusion which is opposite to but equally radical as McElroy's: why hasn't America come to see what Homer, Eakins, and others did?

TOM O'BRIEN

Tom O'Brien chairs the humanities department at Manhattan School of Music.

MORE ART

SCARS OF MODERNISM

THE EVOLUTION OF CZECH ART

Coinciding with the historic visit to this country of the poet-playwright-president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel, the Brooklyn Museum recently presented (through May 7) the first exhibition of its kind in the U.S. documenting the evolution of Czech art during the first half of the twentieth century.

Entitled "Czech Modernism: 1900-1945," the exhibition was organized and initially presented by the Museum of Fine Arts

in Houston. It includes over 100 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by thirteen Czech artists. For the greater parts of their careers, these artists worked in Prague, creating a uniquely Czech expression of modernism. The exhibit is a mixed bag, often bleak, if not claustrophobic. It is interesting for what it conveys of one facet of Czech cultural history.

Frantisek Kupka's (1871-1957) "Cosmic Spring I" is painted in oils in bright, swirling colors, as is his "Disks of Newton." His unusual "The Beginning of Life," part of his series "The Voices of Silence," depicts a human fetus, connected by its umbilical cord, emerging from the blossom of a lily pad. Kupka was also a craftsman who worked in wood. On display here are twenty-five of his fine woodcuts from the series "Four Stories in White and Black." They were a pleasure to see.

Like Kupka, Vojtech Preissig (1873-1944) was an experimenter who moved beyond the influences of symbolism and art nouveau that held sway at the turn of the century. Like Kupka, Preissig was interested in spiritual themes—nature, creation, and regeneration. He is especially remembered for his experiments in printmaking and his collaboration with the graphic artist Alfons Mucha. On view here are two charming pieces: "Landscape," an etching of cottages in the distance with tall, slender trees in the foreground; and "Evening," ink and gouache on board depicting a village beyond a stream. In 1938 Preissig joined the resistance and helped publish the anti-Fascist journal *Into Action*. He was arrested in 1941, imprisoned in Dachau, and died there three years later, far away from the tranquil villages of Bohemia.

Trained as a bookbinder, the illustrator Josef Váchal (1884-1969) had an interest in theosophy, the late nineteenth-century school of the occult based on the thought of such illuminati as Rudolph Steiner and Madame Blavatsky. Its influence is reflected here in Váchal's etchings and engravings for the book *In Memoriam Marie Váchalove*. Who was Marie Váchalove? We are not told. One of the annoying aspects of this exhibition is its failure to provide historical background on the artists, their times, and their works. Since Americans know so little about Czechoslovakia, let alone the history of Czech art, an opportunity for opening this world was lost.

The self-portrait of Emil Filla (1882-1953) is one of the exhib-

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it's more interesting paintings. Painted in 1908, it is Van Gogh-like in its composition and odd use of colors—mostly greens and blues—that creates a strikingly mysterious image. Yet, it does not have the same compelling directness of a Van Gogh portrait. Filla's "The Night of Love" is of poor quality and lacks any sense of effort or ability. Apparently, it was a disastrous night of love. On the other hand, his "Dance of Salome," done after a short visit to Paris in 1910, is attractive and displays greater effort.

Bohumil Kubista (1884-1918), a cubo-expressionist, is represented by his "Hypnotist"—gray and depressing—and his equally enlivening "Murder" and "The Hanged Man." Somewhat more cheerful is Josef Sima's (1891-1971) "Double Landscape: Thunderstorm," a painting which projects an absorbing "land of Narnia" quality.

Otto Gutfreund's (1889-1927) bronze sculpture "Anxiety" depicts a woman with arms crossed, clutching herself. It is an apt image for Czechoslovakia in the first half of this century: two world wars, nazism, and communism would indeed cause anxiety.

But Gutfreund's sculpture says something about modernism itself. By definition, modernism broke away from the past, from principles, form, and standards; experimentation was its creed. Ingredients, no doubt, for anxiety as well.

The Brooklyn Museum itself bears the scars of modernism. Designed in 1893 by the renowned architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White, it was created in the classical style. But in the 1930s, at the height of modernism, its grand staircase and entrance were destroyed by some elite who thought they had the right to impose their modernist proclivities on the grand building. Today, you enter a cold, stark, concrete-floored lobby and gallery—lifeless and boring. It seems not only the Czechs have paid a price for modernism.

I happen to have two small prints done by a Czech friend, Martin Fabik. Under the Communist dictatorship he was unable to exhibit or sell his works, as he was not a member of the Communist party. If anything, this exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum should have made me think of the harsh history of the modernist era. Instead, it made me think of my friend Martin and his fellow Czech artists in the postmodernist era of a free, democratic Czechoslovakia. GEOFFREY GNEUHS

Geoffrey Gneuhs, artist and writer, has visited Czechoslovakia frequently.

MEXICAN & AMERICAN

Unique among immigrant groups

MICHAEL W. FOLEY

Imagine two prominent scholars from two vastly different but bordering nations, each with extensive government experience, writing a book purporting to represent, frankly and openly, the perspectives of each one's society on the other. In *Limits of Friendship*, Robert Pastor, an important player in the Carter administration's Latin America policy, and Jorge Castañeda, a former Mexican ambassador to France and an expert adviser on U.S.-Mexican affairs, do just that in regard to U.S.-Mexican relations. The result is both frustrating and annoying.

It is not that this volume does not offer a wealth of information and insight on most aspects of the relationship. Castañeda, in particular, is adept at informative analysis of everything from how the Mexican school system shapes Mexican attitudes to the United States to the diverse problems of the communities stretched out along the three-thousand-mile border. The problem is rather that the authors have attempted to describe in their parallel chapters some of the tensions that characterize U.S.-Mexican relations.

Pastor and Castañeda set out to represent distinctive viewpoints. For Pastor, especially, this sometimes means taking mainstream positions, even ones he does not hold. While he gives the notions of a Jesse Helms the short shrift they deserve, Pastor's voice is seriously divided, at one moment emphasizing U.S. misunderstanding of Mexico, at the next attacking Mexican intransigence, at the next celebrating the melding of economies and cultures at the border (an essay Castañeda skillfully overturns).

Those who revel in the witch's brew of serious issues and childish bickering that characterizes international relations will find this book intriguing. However, a more constructive approach would have been to survey the differences from some higher ground and to realistically assess alternatives and trends.

The authors observe that so far Mexico has taken little interest in the Mexican-American community in the United States, other than to worry about the treatment of undocumented workers; in turn, the Mexican-American community has done little to influence U.S.-Mexican relations. The appearance in Los Angeles and San Diego last year of "*Superbarrio*," a community organizer from Mexico City's new urban movement who dresses up as a masked super hero, may signal a change. *Superbarrio* represents the most colorful of new efforts on the part of political groups in Mexico to mobilize Mexican-American interest and support. At the same time, Mexico's response to the recent NBC miniseries on the Camerena drug affair suggests that Mexicans have become more

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willing to voice their opinions. A full-page ad in the *New York Times* (January 16) proclaimed "In Mexico We Say: *No a las Drogas!*" and went on to detail the Mexican antidrug effort over the last year. Sponsored by the Advertising Council of the Private Sector Serving Mexico, the ad closed with the provocative "And Meanwhile, What Have You Done in the U.S.A.?" Both *Superbarrio* and the *Times* ad offset for a moment U.S. intervention in Mexican affairs with Mexican intervention here.

The reasons these events stand out in the century-and-a-half triangular relationship among Mexico, the United States, and Mexican-Americans emerge clearly from Mario García's study of what he calls the "Mexican-American Generation," the first generation of Americans of Mexican descent to struggle on a broad scale for civil rights, first-class citizenship, and a secure identity as Mexican-Americans. Bolstered and transformed by the influx of roughly one million Mexicans fleeing the ravages of the revolution (1910-1920), Mexican-American communities by 1930 included a majority of American-born members. The generation who came of age politically in this era took on the task of integrating Mexican-Americans into mainstream U.S. society. Whether they were the middle-class businesspeople and professionals of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), or the working-class leaders of the militant International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, their aims were best captured by the World War II slogan, "Americans All."

By and large, this generation looked neither to Mexico nor to the closed, protective communities of the past for identity, but to an ongoing struggle on behalf of their rights as American citizens, including their right to continue to enjoy their Mexican heritage. Under these circumstances, links with Mexico were few and tentative. Mexican-Americans had their own problems and would not jeopardize their position by identifying too closely with the problems of the homeland. At the same time, García argues convincingly against the interpretation advanced by militant Chicanos in the 1970s, that the aims of the Mexican-American Generation were not "assimilationist" but pluralist: that being fully integrated into American life was by no means incompatible with guarding the language and customs of their parents.

García is not, however, uncritical of the generation whose history he sketches here. They failed to recognize the extent to which the fortunes of Mexicans in the U.S. were conditioned by a socioeconomic structure that had always treated them and their homeland as a source of cheap labor and was not likely to change in fundamental ways despite significant civil rights victories. But this is surely unfair. Though such characterizations apparently apply to most of the middle-class leaders of LULAC and to intellectuals such as University of Texas historian Carlos Castañeda, García's account shows that Mexican-American union militants were anything but ignorant of the weight economic forces exerted on Mexican-Americans. The demise of the umbrella organizations that these union leaders helped to create (the prewar Spanish-Speaking Congress and the postwar *Asociación Nacional México-Americana*) did not come about because their goals were insufficiently "revolutionary" but because of red-baiting. In recording the history of their persecution, García underlines the obstacles to achieving genuine advances for the disadvantaged; but he does Mexican-American leaders a disservice in suggesting that their reformist vision was somehow at fault.

Books Discussed in this Column

Limits of Friendship: The United States and Mexico, *Robert A. Pastor and Jorge G. Castañeda, Random House, $10.95, 414 pp.*

Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology, and Identity, 1930-1960, *Mario T. García, Yale University Press, $35, 364 pp.*

Poorest of Americans: The Mexican-Americans of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, *Robert Lee Maril, University of Notre Dame Press, $19.95, 228 pp.*

Harvest of Hope: The Pilgrimage of a Mexican-American Physician, *Jorge Prieto, University of Notre Dame Press, $20.95, 168 pp.*

Robert Maril's account of the plight of Mexican-Americans in the "cradle of the Mexican-American Generation," García's term for the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, amply confirms the difficulties associated with the economic role Mexican-Americans early came to play in American life. *Poorest of Americans* is a comprehensive survey and a biting analysis of their problems and the causes of persistent poverty in the area. The four counties of the Lower Rio Grande Valley include about six hundred thousand people, 80 percent of whom call themselves Mexican-Americans. In 1983, median income in the four counties ranged between $3,700 and $6,600 per capita—that is, between 32 percent and 57 percent of both U.S. and Texas averages. In 1980, from 25 to 50 percent of valley residents fell below the official poverty line; many towns register over 50 percent at or near poverty. Unemployment was at 12.5 percent in 1978 and 20.5 percent in 1986. Basic infrastructure—paved roads, water and sewage facilities, garbage service—are in short supply throughout the valley, but particularly in the *barrios* and isolated *colonias* of the Mexican-American population.

The roots of this poverty are both economic and political, and they are fed by the very development that the valley has attracted. Counties and towns in the region are governed through the patronage system controlled by small cliques of local elites, mainly but not exclusively Anglo, who have created a loyal middle-class following by dispensing scarce jobs and resources through the school system and city and county governments. With the exception of one or two reformed communities, this is the system that has dominated the valley since the influx of Anglo settlers after the U.S. and Mexican War of 1848. Mexican-American elites and, to some extent, its middle classes, have been incorporated into the system which has, nevertheless, functioned on racist as well as classist lines since its inception.

Economic development in the valley,

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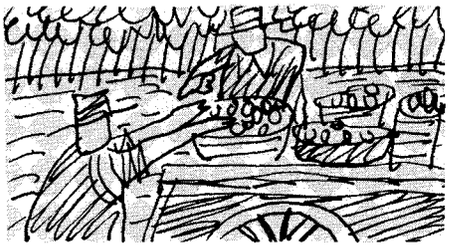
from the irrigation projects of the nineteenth century to the *maquiladora* industries of the 1980s (plants set up on both sides of the border to take advantage of Mexican tax breakes and cheap labor), has been hailed as the solution to valley poverty. But prospects for the poor have increased only marginally over the years, and that only recently. The reasons, again, are both political and economic. The patronage system in the schools has made for the worst educational record in Texas. The long opposition of local physicians and lawyers to competition and "outside agitators" has meant scant access to medical services and legal relief for the poor. But, above all, development has depended upon the one resource valley communities have in abundance, cheap labor. The irrigation system that created one of the richest agricultural areas in Texas was built with the sweat of Mexican and Mexican-American laborers, whose wages could always be suppressed with the knowledge that tens of thousands of potential workers waited just across the border. The *maquiladora* industries, on both sides of the border, offer little chance for advancement. To add insult to injury, the goods produced in the area, from the oil and shrimp of its coastal waters to the citrus fruits of valley orchards to the products of the *maquiladoras*, are more expensive locally than elsewhere in Texas.

Maril thoroughly documents the industrial and wage structure, the demographic characteristics, and the general plight of valley residents. His accounts of "bossism" in valley schools and governments are, by contrast, mostly anecdotal. The personalities involved and the crucial family and business linkages are scarcely touched. It is hard to know just how the system works, or to understand how it has withstood scrutiny all these years. But it is here that Maril's pessimism ought to be shaken, for what he shows is the beginning of significant movement in the valley, from court actions banning the Texas Rangers' involvement in labor disputes to recent attempts to impose fair-school funding provisions on the Texas state legislature to renewed Mexican-American activism in the valley and elsewhere around the state. These events suggest that one day the valley may be less a gateway to poverty for



Mexican immigrants than an introduction to something more closely approximating American dreams.

Jorge Prieto's story is not a rags-to-riches account of one migrant's success, nor does Prieto figure in Garcia's Mexican-American Generation. Nevertheless, his account reflects the difficulties Mexican-Americans have faced and the efforts of an older generation to make their way in America while maintaining their heritage. In publishing this simple, charming memoir, moreover, Notre Dame Press celebrates one of Notre Dame University's glories, a distinguished public servant inspired as a student there to pursue a medical career in hopes of serving Mexican immigrants in the United States.

Prieto was born in the midst of the Mexican Revolution. His father, an aide to revolutionary leader Alvaro Obregon, ran afoul of Obregon in the 1920s and fled to the United States, where he and his family endured the rigors of life as migrants in the Southwest. Prieto returned with his family to Mexico City in 1934 and again after college at Notre Dame, and earned his medical degree at the National University of Mexico. He then fulfilled a year of required "social service" in a desert village in Zacatecas dominated by poverty and the region's wealthy— the one igniting Prieto's compassion, the other his outrage.

This combination of a sweet-tempered compassion and a capacity for moral outrage did not leave Prieto as he took up residence at Columbus Hospital in Chicago and began ministering to the Mexican-American poor of Chicago. In the 1950s his wife persuaded him to join a Christian Family Movement group, whence they moved easily into the growing civil rights movement. His story makes one long for the days when Catholic activism issued in something more catholic and less flawed than the prolife movement. Prieto himself refused to perform abortions, but he quickly came to see "how prevalent and intractable are the marital problems in a poor community." Even if this does not lead him to question the compelling "familism" of Mexican and Mexican-American rhetoric, it did drive him to question, then reject, the church's stand on birth control. His memoirs nevertheless reflect an abiding piety.

From civil rights and neighborhood practice in a Mexican-American community, it was an easy transition to activism in the struggles of the farm workers' movement, taking part in the Delano March and helping to organize the grape boycott. But Prieto's real work was in Chicago, where he went on to accept the first Chair of Family Practice at Chicago's Cook County Hospital. Prieto built the program from scratch, created three clinics in black and Hispanic neighborhoods, and educated a generation of family practitioners in service to poor communities and his own generous principles. Burdened with ill health, he retired in 1984 only to be appointed president of Chicago's Board of Health by Mayor Harold Washington. His life of service was capped by an honorary doctorate from his alma mater in 1984.

Prieto's story brings to life, if only imperfectly and partially, the struggles García and Maril record in more distant terms. All three illustrate the importance for Mexican-Americans of leaving the homeland behind, and the difficulty, to return to our earlier theme, of establishing contacts of a political nature between Mexico and her sons and daughters in this country. This situation is perhaps unique among immigrant groups in America, another paradoxical product of that long, common border, and one which renders still more difficult the situation of both Mexican-Americans and Mexico. More than ever before Mexico needs a sympathetic voice in this country, one capable of moving us beyond the bickering so visibly on display in *Limits of Friendship*. To our loss and to theirs, Mexican-Americans probably will not be able to play this role, for today, perhaps more than ever, and despite all their achievements, Mexican-Americans must be preoccupied with laying claim to a full citizenship that does not preclude cultural distinctiveness. □

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Reveille for Alinsky

LET THEM CALL ME REBEL
Saul Alinsky—His Life and Legacy
Sanford D. Horwitt
Alfred A. Knopf, $29.95, 595 pp.

Jack Clark

From building the CIO in the 1930s among Chicago's packinghouse workers through the struggles of Northern blacks in the late 1960s, Saul Alinksy provided energy and organizational savvy to the great causes of the American Left. He also pioneered new forms of community organization which have thrived in the nearly two decades since his death.

Sanford Horwitt has provided us with a superb biography of this fascinating man. Appropriate to Alinksy's life of action, the narrative moves quickly; appropriate to the seriousness of both Alinsky and Horwitt, the book takes the time and trouble to trace the intellectual roots of Alinsky's activism.

Many Jewish sons of immigrants picked up radical politics with their mother's milk; not so with Alinsky. His family did not participate much in the larger community. Alinsky's early experiences centered on wanting to be strong and respected enough to join in the neighborhood expeditions to "beat up the Polacks" who beat up the Jews in an endless cycle. Although he was not an exceptional student, Saul did well enough to win admission to the University of Chicago. Politically quiescent in the 1920s, the campus didn't engage Alinsky politically or academically until he enrolled in his junior-year sociology courses.

These courses brought Alinsky face-to-face with his city's problems. Some respectable opinion still blamed urban crime and blight on the racial inferiority of the immigrants who lived in the poor and crowded slums; a substantial body of thought, connected to the social work profession, held that delinquency and crimes were individual problems best treated through case work. The University of Chicago sociologists theorized that social disorganization lay at the root of juvenile delinquency and other social disorders. To prove their case, they dispatched students like Saul Alinsky out to learn more about youth gangs, prisoners, even the Capone mob. Saul had to act all at once as an intellectual, a reformer, and a tough street-corner character; the persona fit him for life.

Sociologist Clifford Shaw at the Institute for Juvenile Research hired Alinsky to help put together the Chicago Area Project (CAP), an effort to fight delinquency by restoring to poor communities some of the social structure and organization that was missing. Unlike traditional settlement house efforts, CAP placed trained professionals like Alinsky in support, not leadership, roles. The goal was not to impose a structure on the community but to strengthen institutions and leaders within the community who could provide the necessary social cohesion to fight delinquency and other antisocial impulses. Shaw's work was controversial; social workers charged that CAP tolerated criminal behavior in order to win trust. What's more, the social work profession found the idea of developing indigenous leaders rather than relying on trained professionals abhorrent.

Shaw, nonetheless, shared overall objectives with his professional critics. Settlement house workers and other social workers sought to make the slum more tolerable through their services to the poor; Shaw hoped to achieve social peace by developing stronger community institutions. Alinsky broke from the implicit agreement and chose to use and expand vastly upon Shaw's techniques to challenge the poverty and powerlessness that created the slums.

He got his chance—and earned his fame—in the infamous "Back of the Yards" neighborhood, adjacent to the meatpacking plants. There, Alinsky outgrew his CAP staff role. Shaw meticulously avoided controversial issues like union organizing drives; Alinsky made support of the efforts to organize the packinghouses that dominated the Back of the Yards a centerpiece of his effort.

Organizing meant building up the indigeneous institutions; for most Chicago ethnic neighborhoods in the 1930s, that meant the local Catholic parish. The Back of the Yards differed from previous CAP efforts in that no single ethnic group dominated. Poles probably had a plurality, but Czechs, Lithuanians, and Slovaks were numerous, and even a few Irish and Germans remained, all with parishes and turf of their own. What's more, the older ethnic pastors tended to be hostile to any organization outside their control. Some younger priests, and, very significantly, some liberals in the hierarchy were sympathetic. That, combined with the energy and enthusiasm of the local parks administrator, James Meegan, gave Alinsky the openings he needed. He timed the formal founding of the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council to coincide with a major rally for the union drive; he even managed to orchestrate having Chicago's Auxiliary

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Bishop Bernard Sheil speak with John L. Lewis at the union's rally.

Both the union and the neighborhood council organized successfully, and Saul Alinsky's career as the premier radical community organizer had begun. Bishop Sheil arranged an introduction to Marshall Field, III, who provided a grant to start the Industrial Areas Foundation. With that base, Alinsky was free to part company with Shaw, who had no desire to keep this controversial figure on the CAP staff. The Back of the Yards Council functioned well, and Alinsky was a good publicist, so soon the controversy turned to praise. The *Washingon Post* and the *New York Herald Tribune* were citing Alinsky's work as a national model for revitalizing democracy.

The Back of the Yards was organized in 1939; Alinsky remained a nationally known figure until his sudden death in 1972. In that period, he played a role in battling McCarthyism, helped launch the first effort to empower California's large Chicano population (Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers got his first organizing job in that effort), worked with church leaders to battle white flight in Chicago, and successfully organized in black ghettos in Rochester and Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood.

Through it all, Alinsky was a bold and brilliant tactician. Rochester's blacks were stymied in their effort to get Eastman Kodak to hire more blacks; Alinsky brought the fight to Kodak's annual board meeting and used the proxies of religious groups holding stock to confront the corporation. In Woodlawn, residents could not get their buildings fixed up; bus loads of blacks headed out to picket the suburban and segregated homes of slumlords. The packinghouse workers anticipated police brutality on their 1946 picket line; the picket line was led by Catholic priests.

Horwitt shows no hesitation in giving us a full picture of Alinksy, complete with blemishes. The bluff, overstatement, and bluster which served Alinsky so well could often be a fault. He confidently called for the creation of a national network of people's organizations in *Reveille for Radicals*, for example. Yet, Alinsky already knew the difficulty of transferring his success from the Back of the Yards to packinghouse neighborhoods in Kansas City and South St. Paul. As large as his accomplishments were, Alinsky had to embellish them further (a trait not unknown among his many disciples in the diverse world of current community organizing). Ralph Helstein, the president of the Packinghouse Workers and a close friend and neighbor of Alinsky's, tried to get Alinsky working with Martin Luther King, Jr., a partnership Helstein was certain would benefit both men. Alinsky ridiculed the idea, because—in Helstein's view—Alinsky could not stand being second banana.

The book suffers some minor flaws. For example, the relationship between Bishop Sheil and Alinsky was pivotal for both. The sudden ending of their friendship as Sheil lost power in the church is inadequately explained. Similarly, Alinsky's wife, Helene, was a professional and active social worker. He spent his entire life attacking the profession; we get no glimpse of what this meant in their relationship, even though Horwitt goes to great lengths to explain, for example, how Alinsky's skepticism of psychiatry affected his friendship with Max Gitelson.

Horwitt's biography and Alinsky's ideas deserve a wide audience. The problems of powerlessness, poverty, and social disorganization we see today have probably not been so evident in American life since Saul Alinsky began his flamboyant career in the 1930s. □

PORTRAITS OF THE ARTISTS

THE IMAGE OF THE BLACK IN WESTERN ART
Volume IV: From the American Revolution to World War I—Part 1 and 2
Hugh Honor
Harvard University Press, $50 each, 379 pp. and 306 pp.

Julius Lester

Although designated as Volume IV, these two books are the third in the monumental series tracing white images of blacks throughout Western civilization.

The first volume covered the period from ancient Egypt to the fall of the Roman empire. The second volume went from the early Christian era to the "Age of Discovery" and was issued in two parts. The third volume, still in preparation, will cover Africa and Europe—the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. There has been no public indication yet as to whether there will be a fifth volume to go from the end of World War I to the present.

The series is an extraordinary undertaking, both in concept and execution. For all of Western history, white perceptions and evaluations of blacks have been put forward as accurate descriptions of black reality. Thus, an entire civilization's view of itself has centered on the concept of black inferiority. This concept has dictated the actions of governments and white people in how they have related to nonwhite people around the world.

Although blacks throughout Western history challenged Eurocentric notions of reality, only within the past two decades have such challenges begun to take root. Now more nonblack scholars are looking at Western history with the idea that what needs to be examined is the white Western psyche and what led it to feel compelled to assert white superiority with such conviction and fanaticism to the detriment of so many human lives.

One of the most convincing ways to do this has been through a systematic examination of art. Words are susceptible to varying interpretations, especially when dealing with ancient languages. Art is direct and concrete. The image is there before the eyes, making a statement about the one who made it and the time in which he or she lived.

The pioneering work in this field was done by the black scholar Frank Snowden in his *Blacks in Antiquity*, where he exam-

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ined images of blacks in the sculpture and vase paintings of the Greco-Roman period. There the image of blacks revealed none of the negative aspects it was given later in Western civilization.

The value of the approach pioneered by Snowden and so magnificently fulfilled by the present series is the incontrovertibility of the evidence. Whether it is a picture we take with our Polaroids or Kodaks, or a portrait painted by one of the masters, a picture is a portrait of the artist's emotional relationship to the subject. Any picture, then, is a self-portrait, saying far more about the portrayer's emotional landscape than that of the portrayed. A picture is worth far more than a thousand words because the image goes far beyond words into the realm of verbally inexpressible and unconscious emotion.

The Menil Foundation is the guiding and guardian spirit behind these volumes, and using the pictorial resources at the foundation's disposal, the story that unfolds is, quite literally, a portrait of the changes in and evolution of the white Western psyche.

The image of blacks in pagan antiquity was what we today would consider positive, i.e., blacks were not portrayed differently from whites. With the Christian era, there is a startling change. In medieval iconography, demons, torturers, infidels as well as the devil are portrayed as black. If God assumed human form in the form of a white Jesus, the devil was incarnated as a black Ethiopian. This view is modified when Western contacts with Byzantium and Islam are resumed. Influences from these cultures result in blacks being portrayed as legendary figures—St. Thomas the Apostle, the black king of the Magi, the black Madonna, Prester John, and St. Maurice.

Because the volumes are being published out of sequence, the chronology is broken and in this, Volume IV, we find ourselves in the age of slavery and images of the kind we would expect of subservient blacks. There are notable exceptions to such images, the American Winslow Homer being one example of an artist whose portrayal of blacks set a standard of integrity.

The exceptions do not make the rule, and the value of the two books in Volume IV is that the images reproduced and analyzed are not restricted to the fine arts. Illustrations from books and the press are also considered and these were more influential than fine art in shaping public opinion.

The overwhelming evidence of the images presented leads to a very simple conclusion, stated with eloquent simplicity by the author: "The portrayal of a black by a white artist is a kind of image of otherness even when it suggests that the difference is no more than literally skin-deep."

The strength of the books is in the reproduction of hundreds of illustrations, painting, busts, and sculptures, many in color, and the acute analysis in the accompanying text, an analysis which teaches one how to look at a painting in such a way that it reveals the psyche of the creator. The paintings are also placed in their proper historical contexts.

These are not volumes for casual reading, and it is assumed that the reader has a general knowledge of Western civilization. Even with a general knowledge, these are volumes meant for slow reading and brooding reflection.

If there is any criticism it is that one would have wished for less of the narrow analysis focused on the art and more of a broader analysis of the psychohistorical reasons behind the racism so evident in the images. But that would expect these volumes to do everything, which would be unfair.

The accomplishment represented by this series is monumental and revolutionary. These volumes require very real modifications in how Western civilization is studied and taught. And that is long overdue. □

SOON TO BE A MOVIE

A CLOUD ON SAND
Gabriella De Ferrari
Knopf, $19.95, 416 pp.

Linda Simon

A Cloud on Sand is one of those romantic novels about the struggles between a mother and daughter, set against a background of exotic locales and the distant rumblings of war. The mother is domineering, the daughter reticent; but in the end, the power shifts so that the daughter claims her own life. The story is so familiar that, in the hands of a less talented writer, it would be merely a cliché. But Gabriella De Ferrari, whose first novel this is, has created characters of rare charm and set them in a richly detailed context. *A Cloud on Sand* is an impressive debut.

The plot centers on the relationship between Dora di Credi, a grand, flamboyant, unconventional woman, and her daughter, Antonia, at first likely to be subsumed by so ferocious a mother, but who eventually emerges from Dora's domination to become a strong-willed, capable, and beautiful woman. The tension between the two partly is motivated by Dora's need for constant affirmation of her daughter's distinctiveness and her sexuality; she seems to be the wrathful queen who would like Snow White's heart on a platter.

When Antonia is young, Dora usually ignores her quiet, mousy daughter, aiming occasional remarks at her plumpness or bad legs to undermine her confidence and keep Antonia submissive and dependent. When Antonia succeeds in entering a wider world, when she in fact receives attention from admirers, Dora is vengeful. It should come as no surprise that the final rift between them is inspired by a man.

Although there are a few peripheral female characters, the most significant secondary roles in this novel go to men: the elegant Count Mora, an elderly gentleman who for a short time is Dora's lover and for a longer time a surrogate father to her children; Rodolfo, Dora's late husband, revived in flashbacks, who lived in Buenos

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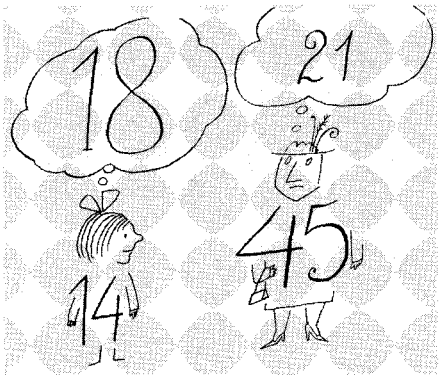

Aires and made occasional visits to his family; and Arturo, Antonia's husband, an ideal mixture of strength and compassion, authority and sensitivity.

When we meet Dora and her two children—Antonia has a brother, Marco—she is living in a small village on the Italian Riviera, reigning there as Artemisia's most notorious widow, inhabiting a villa far more opulent than any of her neighbors' homes. She is an indifferent mother, often leaving her children in the care of servants while she takes off for Paris, perhaps, or Monte Carlo. Dora does not care what anyone thinks of her—and everyone does think of her: she is impressive and unforgettable, and she nurtures her own legend.

Surely it is difficult to have Dora for a mother, but Antonia, with Count Mora's moral and financial support, manages to make a life for herself. She is training to be a nurse, much to her mother's dismay, when she meets Arturo, a businessman visiting from South America, and decides to marry him. When Arturo presents this proposal to Dora, she tries to seduce him; but Arturo is determined to marry Antonia, and afterwards he quickly carries her away to a small, primitive village in what appears to be Peru.

From this point in the novel, Dora disappears—she writes to Antonia, but her letters are intercepted by Arturo and we do not read them until later. Her absence is missed: she is truly extraordinary, and the other characters simply are not as compelling. Dora, as Count Mora admits, "was like a storm at sea, a typhoon, a force of nature itself. You may not like the typhoon: It may frighten you; it may, of course, even kill you. But you are never more alive than when you are in it." And the novel is never more alive than when Dora is its focus.

Antonia's story, after she leaves Artemisia, is the predictable discomfort of a cultured woman in a peasant society, and we watch Antonia adapt herself as well as she can to life in the New World, gradually earning the respect and love of her neighbors. Arturo, as you may have guessed, eventually dies—he is simply too perfect a man to endure—but we know that Antonia, now with a daughter of her own, will manage very well indeed.

Although the story itself is nothing new, Gabriella De Ferrari writes with clarity and feeling, and there is nothing that escapes her observation. Dora is so palpable a presence because De Ferrari has imbued her every gesture with distinction: when we see her walking down the streets of Genoa we know immediately why Rodolfo was so deeply fascinated. When we see Count Mora's face, "like a round, pink sea with delicate features like tiny islands," we know why Antonia and Marco were so quick to trust him.

At times, De Ferrari complicates the story unnecessarily, for example when she frames Antonia's memories of her life as if she were being interviewed by her niece, Marta. When Marta's husband suggests that Dora, not Antonia, is the real center of the tale, Marta insists that he is "very wrong.... Can't you see how she's the center of everything? Her mother may have been flamboyant, but Antonia is the one who triumphed over her. Can't you see that?" But Marta's husband remains unpersuaded and so, I imagine, will most readers.

For all of Antonia's underlying strength and "hidden asymmetry," for all of the "glowing coals" ready to burst into flame, Antonia seems far less complex, far less mysterious than her mother. Dora, says the count, was "the first person I have ever met who had totally invented herself...." Although Dora fails to triumph at the end, although her sense of loss undoes her, although she fails, at last, to understand the meaning of her own life, she stands as the single tragic figure in this novel, and the one who, throughout, commands our attention. □

REVIEWERS

JACK CLARK *works for the Massachusetts secretary of labor and serves on the national political committee of the Democratic Socialists of America.*

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IN BRIEF

CREATIVE COMMUNION, *by Joe Holland, Paulist Press, $4.95, 87 pp.*

Joe Holland, setting out here a creation-centered spirituality of work, breaks new ground in his writing. He casts his arguments in terms of culture and spirituality rather than political economy. This shift comes in the midst of what he sees as a new and positive spiritual moment. The oppressive legacies of Greek dualism are withering away leaving fresh possibilities for a less hierarchical, more lay-centered church. Such a moment, he argues, requires a new spirituality of work to help free the creativity of the laity. It is to that end that he wrote the book. He would have done better to stick to political economy.

This is not an easy book to read. Many sentences float in imprecision. Here is Holland on the meaning of work: "The cyclical holism of production and reproduction linked in turn to the subjective/objective creativity of labor and the spiritual depth of its secularity." Then there are the sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. For example, Protestantism has a pessimistic view of work. No doubt true in part, given the Protestant wariness of justification by works. Yet what about Calvin's far more positive view of the vocation of secular work? The generalizations are especially problematic when Holland writes of creation theology. The assertion that "creation is the fundamental doctrine of theology" is debatable. Gerhard Von Rad, the great exegete, argued that salvation was the fundamental doctrine of Israel and that the doctrine of creation was only seen in light of it. Holland never adequately takes up such questions.

Grace, Holland argues, is primarily revealed in God's ongoing creation. (He

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sets such an understanding against the prevailing view that grace is present in our creation and is also given afterward for our redemption.) We are to connect to this primal source of grace through "creative communion," which Holland understands as union with the divine and feminine source of life immanent in the earth (although not identical with the earth). This communion seems primarily to mean a blend of a fecund sexual love and creative work. What is the precise nature of this work? In places he terms it "care and service," connecting work and ecology. Elsewhere he calls it "production" and links it to human "reproduction." Work, then, ought to involve the environmentally safe creation of some tangible product. Sin is what blocks the ease of this creativity. Work after expulsion from the garden has become a "harsh struggle." Sin has occurred because throughout history the transcendent male principle has broken communion and sought instead domination of women and of the earth.

This theology raises a number of difficulties. For one, the stereotype of male as transcendent and female as immanent. This is simplistic compared to the real-life mix of these qualities in men and women. Furthermore, even given the sad, long, and continuing history of patriarchy, it is facile to locate the cause of all sin in what is portrayed as a specifically male quality.

Given this view of grace, the role of Jesus is negated and his humanity stripped away. Indeed, the significance of his life, death, and Resurrection as they apply to work is subordinated to a sense of Jesus as purveyor of cosmic creativity. "Jesus' gospel," Holland writes, "speaks to the work process not because he grew up in a carpenter's family, but because he proclaims a new creation." This new creation, Holland says with extraordinary optimism, restores us "to the primal condition before sin and its consequences" in which the holistic and easy creativity of work—with its ready capacity to yield a product—is entirely restored.

Indeed, that work ought to be easy production is the underlying point of Holland's spirituality. Yet in arguing for this view, he buys into one of the most problematic aspects of the American concept of work—the need to work for work's sake and to produce regardless of what it is we might be producing. Holland is not unaware of this bourgeois anxiety, yet in the end he has constructed a spirituality that justifies it. DAVID E. DeCOSSE

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 338)

during the Depression. They understood the hardships that working women faced with multiple pregnancies....

The church's ability to persuade its own members, not to mention a pluralistic society, to ban abortions is undermined by its official prohibition of contraceptives, generally regarded as a responsible way of spacing children and preventing the need for abortions. In underdeveloped countries—most especially those in Catholic Latin America—contraceptives are essential for population control, a necessary ingredient in moving beyond poverty. If the church is to be truly persuasive on abortion, it will have to revise its teaching against contraceptives. Its failure to do so may perhaps be explained by the exclusion of women from the doctrine-making, doctrine-interpreting levels of the church.

I recognize that abortion is a moral issue, one on which the bishops have not only a right but an obligation to express their opinions. Yet, I am forever struck by the fact that the church lobbies harder on issues affecting women—abortion and contraceptives—than it does on other sections of the "seamless garment." Were the bishops to direct their aggressive legislative support and devote vastly more of church resources to, say, childcare centers in poor neighborhoods, their credibility among women would be enhanced. And so would their persuasiveness on the morality of abortion. That, perhaps, should be the starting point for a new strategy.

KATHLEEN C. RIDDER

Projecting hysteria

Pittsburgh, Pa.

To the Editors: Your "Strategy Time III" editorial [February 23] criticizing NOW and NARAL for their strong support of abortion rights suffers a great deal from the hysteria you seek to remove from the abortion debate. [For one example] you suggest that both NOW and NARAL have reduced a women's movement once aimed broadly at "economic, social, and educational justice" which maintained "a vision of a more egalitarian society" to the single issue of abortion....

Your criticism echoes charges leveled against women at least twice before in the history of the American women's movement. In the early twentieth century critics charged women with focusing too exclusively on the effort to gain the right to vote, and just recently critics have blamed women's organizations for placing too much emphasis on passing the Equal Rights Amendment. Historians still debate whether such a narrow focus damaged the women's movement, and even whether women's organizations focused as narrowly as critics suggested. But in any case, the intense concentration of resources each of these hurdles demanded long ago muddied the idyllic picture of the movement you suggest existed until the current emphasis on abortion rights.

You can argue with NOW and NARAL reasonably for their positions and tactics on the ... issue of abortion, but the blame you place on them for destroying a widely focused women's movement reflects too much the hysteria you decry in your opponents. TIMOTHY KELLY

Not-so-consistent ethic

Seattle, Wash.

To the Editors: As a Roman Catholic woman and mother of two teen-agers, I am concerned that the reasoned debate you have called for on the abortion issue has not included the women's point of view. While I support Cardinal Bernardin's call for creating a consistent ethic of life [*Commonweal*, April 20], I do not see consistency in the tradition as he does....

[For one example] women are noting a serious inconsistency, not in the principle of the sacredness of human life, but in the way the principle is applied in the two areas of war and abortion. Cardinal Bernardin, as chair of the committee of bishops who prepared *The Challenge of Peace*, is aware that the danger of nuclear war is the most serious threat to life on earth today. In spite of that, no moral sanctions were urged for

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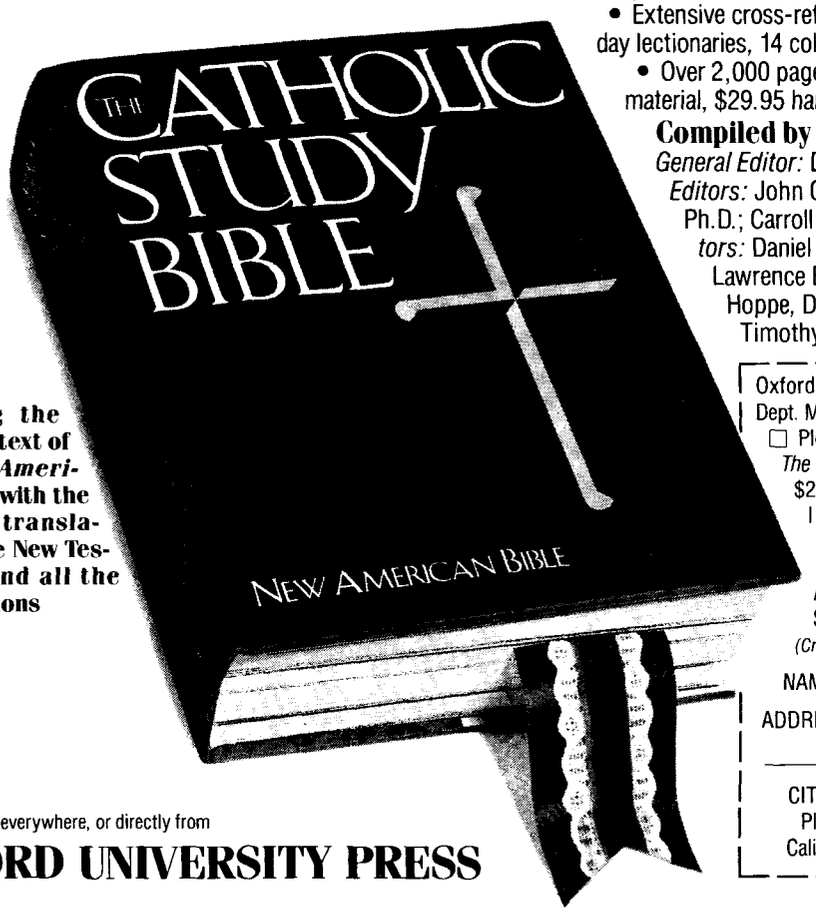

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COMING
Why the Third World Languishes

those who build, deploy, and control nuclear weapons, nor on members of the military who destroy innocent life in war.

In contrast, any Catholic woman who has an abortion is automatically excommunicated. When a Catholic politician is prochoice, she or he is threatened with excommunication. Our bishops have not uttered such threats for politicians who disagree with their stands on other issues. Why? Because men make wars and women have abortions?

There is an underlying thread of misogyny, hatred of women, in the tradition that leads to such inconsistencies. And since it is women who ultimately hold fetal life in their hands, hiring a public relations firm to sell their position on abortion will not be effective until the bishops deal with this misogyny. There are holes in the seamless garment that need to be patched.

MARY JOHANNA RYAN

Symptom not cause

Alexandria, Va.

To the Editors: Some of the crucial questions about abortion are: When does a human life begin; when does a fetus become a person? Who shall decide whether a fetus is brought to term—the parents or the state? If the state decides, then how will it decide, who will be punished, and what will the penalties be? Should abortion be primarily a matter of conscience or primarily a matter of law? Who will provide food, clothing, shelter, medical care, etc., for a child brought into the world against his/her parents' will?

I have often wondered why right-to-life people do not show the same concern for saving the lives of starving children around the world that they do for saving unborn fetuses. It seems to me that abortion, like drugs and alcohol, is a symptom of a problem rather than the cause, and that much more can be done to educate people and provide alternatives to abortion.

When a fetus becomes a person is still debatable.... Because there is no consensus on abortion, and because abortion may, at times, be a moral act, then the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision, as I understand it, seems just and prudent. As Supreme Court Justice O'Connor has observed: If the state has the power to prohibit abortions, then it can also have the power to require them.

ANTHONY J. DiSTEFANO

Cuomo 'ambiguous'

Birmingham, Ala.

To the Editors: Mario Cuomo's letter on abortion [March 23] disturbed me for two reasons. First, and fundamentally, the governor's letter, like the 1984 Notre Dame address on which he relies, reaches political conclusions too easily while harboring too much ethical ambiguity. It surely is Cuomo's right to make independent prudential political judgments. But it is also his duty, at least when treating serious issues, to explain how he arrives at those judgments.

In his letter he baldly pronounces: "My prudential political judgment, formed by examining all available evidence, is that these [abortion-restricting] actions would not have such desirable effects [as engendering greater respect for life]." What available evidence? And would any lives be saved?....

This penchant for conclusion in place of explanation goes back to Notre Dame. That speech ran slightly over eighteen pages. Cuomo spent roughly a page discussing why neither national nor state bars on abortion were tenable. Without reference to polling data or compromise areas of citizen agreement, Cuomo simply deemed the Catholic view as "in the minority" and predicted "Prohibition revisited" in the event of abortion's being re-outlawed.

Without referring to either the pre-*Roe* status of state-level politics or the overwhelming majority of states which preclude public funding of abortions, the governor dismissed a return to a state-by-state approach as leading to a "checkerboard of permissive and restrictive jurisdictions" and a continuation of abortion by the "millions." No evidence, no argument.

A few things make Cuomo's rhetoric of conclusion workable. Most essentially, Cuomo frames the abortion discussion so that his burden of persuasion as to why he need not press for abortion's outlawing is very light. "Abortion is sinful but, practically, has to remain legal" rolls off the lips a lot more smoothly than "Abortion is homicidal but, practically, has to remain legal." Cuomo keeps unclear whether he regards all, or any, abortions to constitute the taking of an actual human life; whether he acknowledges the fetus as a person at any gestational point....

The governor's ambiguity on this point, again, is a carry-over from Notre Dame. There he referred to "life in the womb, which is at the very least *potentially human* and should not be extinguished casually" [emphasis added] and also stated: "At the very least, even if the argument is made by some scientists or some theologians that in the earliest stages of fetal development we cannot discern human life, the full *potential of human life* is indisputably there" [emphasis added]. Fudging matters further, Cuomo spoke of abortion, divorce, and birth control in the same breath no fewer than four times.

True, Cuomo did rather cryptically concede that "there are differences both in degree and quality between abortion and some of the other religious positions the church takes: abortion is a 'matter of life and death' and degree counts." But did he mean life and death of an actual or a merely potential person? Candidate Cuomo's earlier ... promise to protect New Yorkers' "reproductive freedom" (*New York Times*, October 28, 1982) would lead one to believe he meant merely a potential person. Still, a 1985 *Commonweal* interview would suggest Cuomo meant an actual person. Then again, his more recent designation of abortion as "a matter of the woman's conscience" (*New York Times*, September 9, 1989) puts a clear answer to Cuomo's meaning out of focus, as does his discussion of public funding always in terms of fairness to poor women and never in terms of the consequence for the fetuses of these women.

Cuomo has to state plainly and consistently when (if ever) he believes the fetus constitutes an actual person and then shoulder his very heavy burden in arguing for the legal tolerance of abortions beyond that point.

Ironically, my second reason for disappointment over Mario Cuomo's mishandling of abortion is deepened by a recently renewed appreciation for his stand against

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the death penalty.

At this year's beginning, I left the state that Cuomo has kept free of the death penalty and took up residence in a Southern state with an abundance of death row inmates and a dearth of lawyers to represent them.

Down here, execution is all the rage. Even the sunniest day can be marred by a newspaper's, or radio show's, casual and approving allusion to the state's needless and coldblooded killing of a prisoner.

Maybe this lawyer's days are more easily spoiled because my clients are all under capital sentence. But I believe any outsider would be struck by the way in which the death penalty acts like a foul toxin contaminating this purportedly Christian community. Any New Yorker in exile, moreover, would feel a very genuine sense of debt to Cuomo for sparing the Empire State such moral pollution.

Perhaps that debt is best repaid by demanding that Cuomo live up to his intellectual and moral capabilities where any life issue is concerned.

KEVIN M. DOYLE

Cuomo 'lucid'

Douglaston, N.Y.

To the Editors: People of good will can welcome the intelligent and lucid arguments Governor Cuomo utilizes in his letter to *Commonweal*, as well as his call for further dialogue to replace the shouting matches between prolife and prochoice proponents. In the future, however, one would hope that the governor would address some more complex issues. Here are a few that interest me:

(1) I am a person with polio and walk with the aid of a brace. Should a fetus recognized to be missing a limb be aborted if the mother so chooses? How about a Down's Syndrome child? Or other physical defects that some of us would recognize as relatively minor?

(2) Should parents who wanted a boy (or girl) and learn by amniocentesis that their wish was not granted be allowed to abort without comment?

(3) Does the performance of 1.5 million abortions annually indicate anything about our culture, other than that many of us do not want to become parents? If so, what?

(4) If it's a woman's choice how her body is to be "used," should we take another look at our prostitution laws?

I could list other such questions ad nauseam. The strength of Governor Cuomo's letter is his apparent recognition that there are limitations in both the prolife and prochoice positions. If a real national dialogue can ever be undertaken on this matter, perhaps legislation that satisfies a wider consensus can be implemented. Perhaps Governor Cuomo can be a leader of such a movement.

JOSEPH MULHOLLAND

No funding for life

Scipio Center, N.Y.

To the Editors: I've developed an uncomfortable case of dismay since reading Governor Cuomo's clarion call for "The Decade of the Child" [March 23, p. 198].

The Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry (FLOSM) is one of three regional offices in the diocese of Rochester serving people through various support programs. In Seneca County (population 31,000), one of the most rural counties of the state, we have been administering a teen-age pregnancy program for three years. The program attempts to promote self-sufficiency for pregnant and parenting teens through a community-based system of service, networking, and referral. It provides direct services which address personal, educational, vocational, social, and physical needs.

In 1988, the first year of the program, funding from the New York State Department of Social Services was $50,000. The goal was to locate twenty clients who could use counseling from our professional personnel; sixty-one people were served.

Year two (1989) the funding was reduced to $37,000 as originally planned, before we became aware of the tremendous workload that was to be discovered. The staff has estimated that the client list could double.

The third year the funding is to decrease to $25,000 and we are told to seek outside funding. We have not been successful in obtaining this outside funding at a level which would allow the program to continue—a tragedy for our children and an embarrassment for our state.

Why is it that full funding is considered humane when it comes to abortion and death, but ... only partial funding, if any, is warranted for a program to support life?

Dialogue is an additive, not an answer! Until adequate funding is available to support the child in this decade through programs that have proven to be successful, the governor's statement that "... we surely are fully committed to nurturing, caring, and loving the children left in our charge" can only be read with misgivings and doubt.

RICHARD F. REDMOND

The writer is president of the Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry.

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